Smithsonian

May 1994

'Big Bird' of Belize

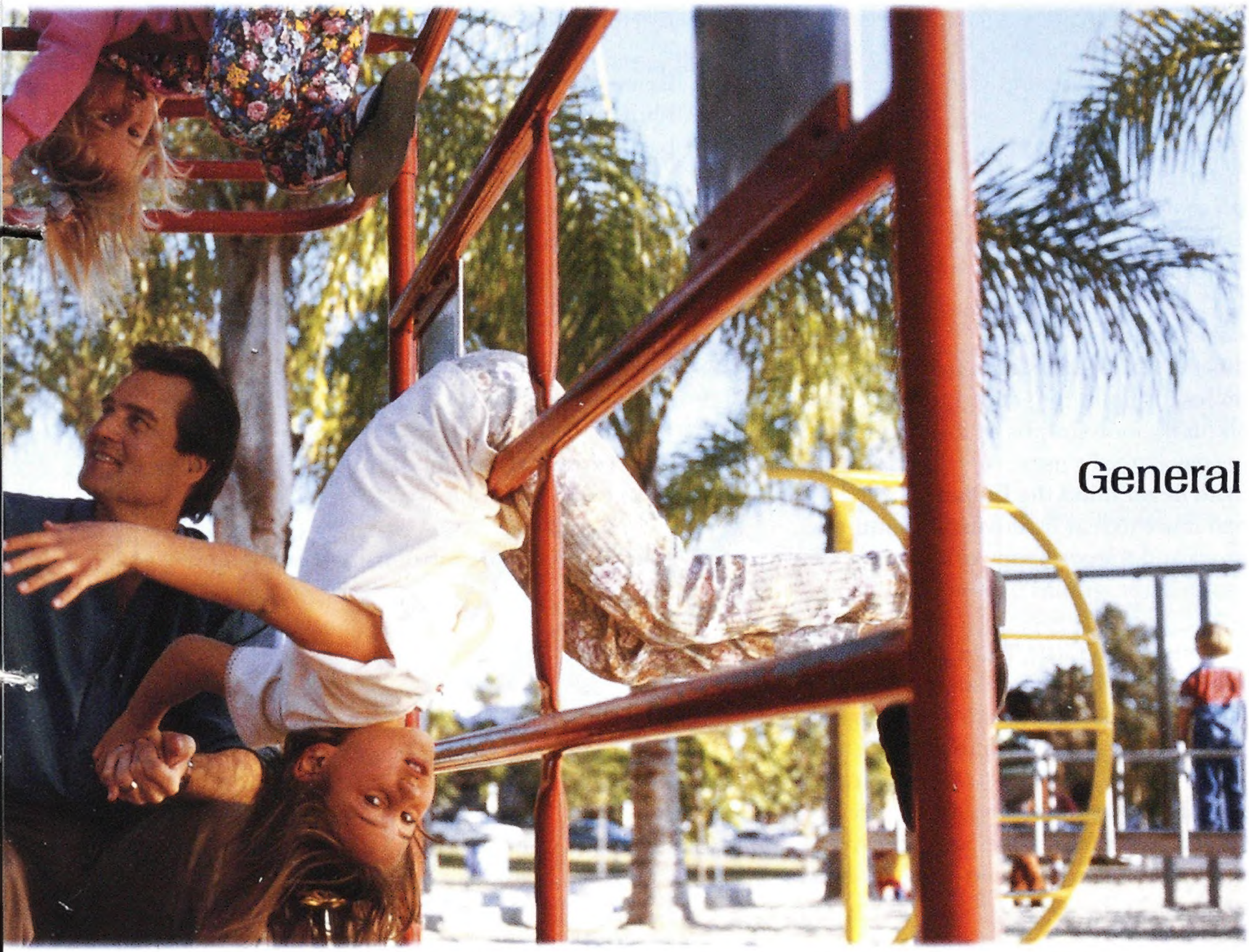
A national symbol of pride in nature (p. 84)

"If people don't feel

does that say about

John Hine, a Pontiac dealer like his father before him, knows that the best way to earn someone's trust is to first earn their respect. And over the years, he's found that this applies to everyone from first-time customers to his own three children. John knows that what he says and does matters as much as the hum

"I'm reliable, what the cars I sell?"



General Motors

of the engine and the feel of the seats. Which, if you think about it, makes perfect sense. Because not everyone is an automotive engineer. And not everyone knows exactly what a great car should sound like. But they know respect when they hear it. And these days at General Motors dealerships, the sound is unmistakable.

May 1994

Smithsonian

Volume 25, Number 2

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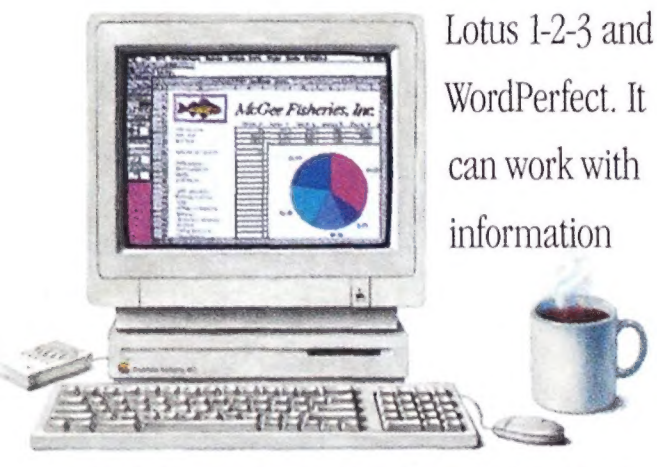

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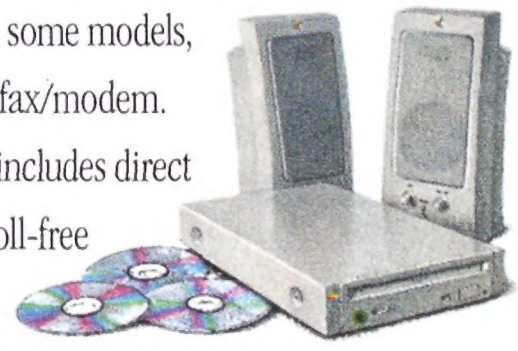

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Photos courtesy Dwight D. Eisenhower Library/U.S. Army/Coast Guard

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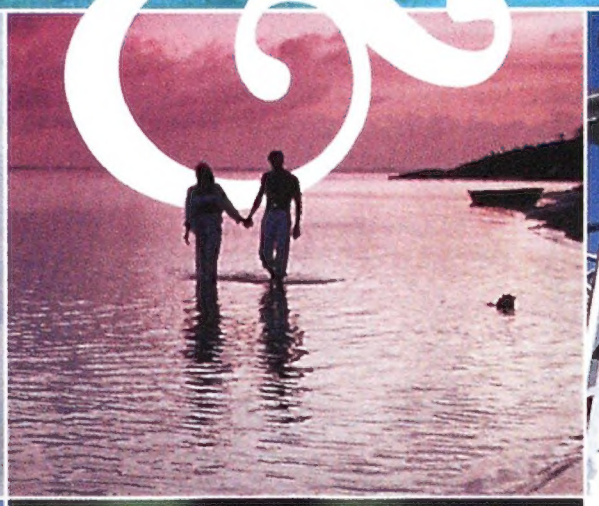

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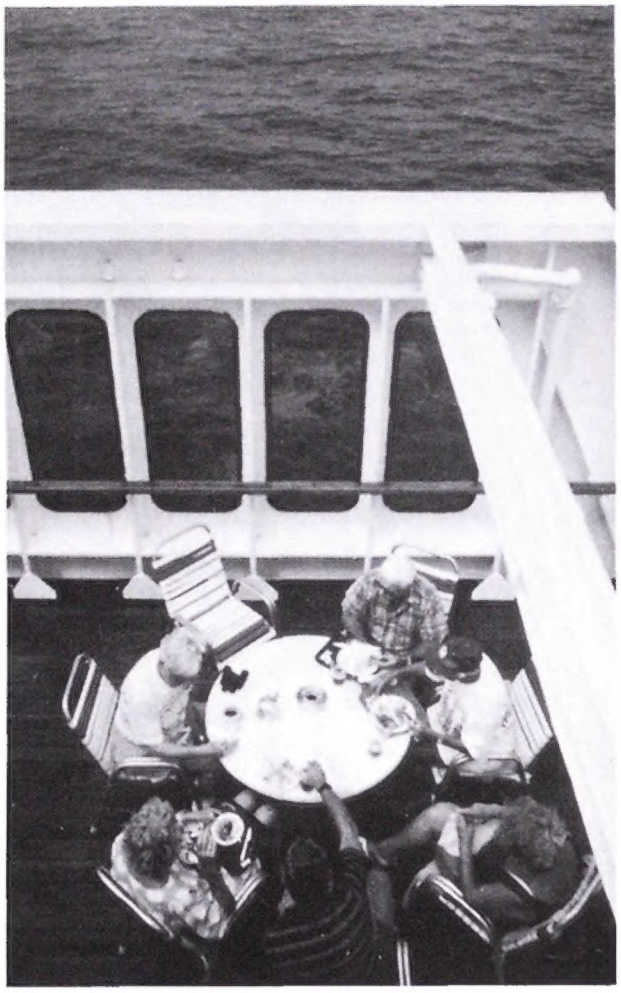

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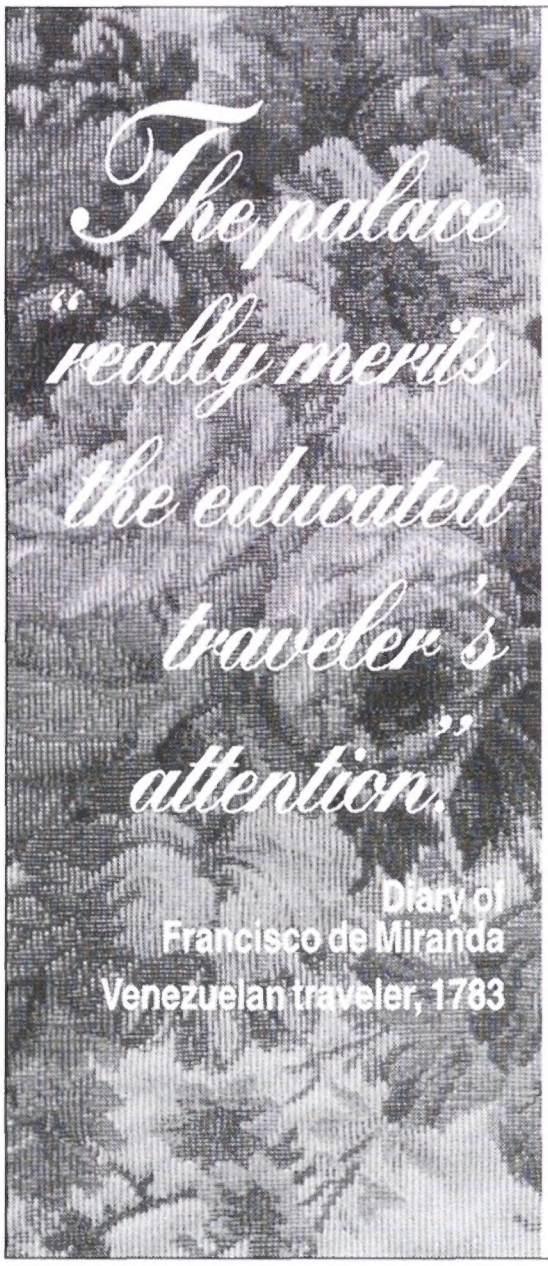

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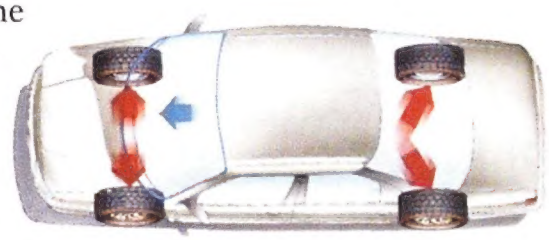

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Smithsonian horizons

Qualities that make the Smithsonian special derive from its openness–to change, diversity and the future

As the end of my decade-long service as Secretary of the Smithsonian draws nearer, I find myself reflecting more and more frequently on the Institution's enduring characteristics. We all like to think that what we do makes a difference, and sometimes it does. But how much difference and of what kind?

For two reasons, such questions are difficult to answer even tentatively until many years later. First, if there have been changes for which one would like to claim some responsibility, will they persist or soon begin to fade away? Second, would they have happened anyway, simply as a result of larger changes in the American value system, society, polity, economy, federal budget or whatever, from which the Smithsonian can in no way be insulated? But without hazarding any answers, the questions themselves stimulate thoughts about what has made the Smithsonian permanently so special.

One essential feature, I have concluded, is the Institution's spirited pluralism–or perhaps "federalism" is a better word in the context of this country's history. Most visitors come to Washington thinking of "the Smithsonian" as a single entity, but what they really encounter is a quite heterogeneous assemblage of great museums. For each museum, its distinctively different collections, curatorial disciplines, internal as well as external resources, supporting constituencies among the public, and traditions converge to define its own set of programs and outlooks. A wise Smithsonian Regent once said to me that trying to impose common policies on museums that are so different in basic subject and style, which open their own doors to their own stream of visitors each day, would be like trying to herd cats.

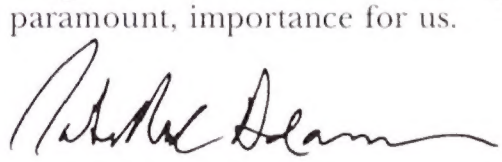
But the point is, this considerable degree of autonomy–ultimately subject, of course, to the centrally managed discipline of the budget–is necessary and constructive. Like the accompanying research, the managing of collections and the conceiving and designing of exhibits is creative work. It flourishes best in an atmosphere of freedom, not conformity. As we repeatedly have to insist in legal and bureaucratic skirmishing, the Smithsonian is "an independent trust of the United States," not an agency of the federal government. Its own governance has, and should have, more in common with the looser reins and tolerance of diversity found in universities. To be sure, there is also an overriding responsibility to the American public for which there is no real university equivalent.

No less important is a second enduring characteristic. The Smithsonian is a *living* institution, undergoing change all the time. How could it be otherwise? Everything we seek to study and represent is changing; the technical means at our disposal are rapidly and continuously advancing; and the audiences with whom we wish to communicate are not only demanding more and more of us but are also taking an increasingly active role in dialogue with us. Not all changes turn out to be improvements. Mistakes sometimes get made whenever one is committed to striking off in new directions. But the important thing is to correct them in a timely fashion, and to draw the appropriate lessons from them. The worst mistake of all would be to think we could just stand still and be content to look only backward.

Third, this is an institution committed to maintaining a long-term view of the trajectory it proposes to follow, and not to be caught up only in the vicissitudes of the present. This implies no disrespect for the annual oversight processes in the Executive and Legislative branches of government by which our activities are reviewed and our budgets set. But we have a parallel responsibility to prepare thoughtfully for the central, yet surely different, role that the Institution will be called upon to play a decade, or two or three, hence.

With the support of the Mellon and MacArthur foundations, the Regents have established the Commission on the Future of the Smithsonian, which has begun to take a crucial part in this process. It is a broad and diverse, as well as eminent, body, with Dr. Maxine Singer, president of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, as its Chair. The Commission plans to report to the Board of Regents next year and in the meantime is communicating frequently with them. Meeting with me and presently with my successor as Secretary, it will help to assure a smooth transition.

Fourth, and finally–at least for this month's installment–the Smithsonian is as central as any public institution in the cultural life of the United States. I am not sure when it achieved that centrality–probably as a result of its extraordinary growth under my predecessor, S. Dillon Ripley, but perhaps earlier as well. In any case, it must always work actively to maintain and enhance that centrality. I confidently believe that reaching out to new audiences, and opening new dialogues as well as deepening and extending old ones, will be of enduring, even paramount, importance for us.



Every man over 50 should take this

PROSTATE TEST

Please answer the following questions:

YES NO

- ☐ ☐ Do you urinate often, especially during the night?
- ☐ ☐ Do you have trouble starting your urine stream?
- ☐ ☐ Do you have a weak or interrupted urine stream?
- ☐ ☐ Does it feel like your bladder isn't emptying completely?

Please detach and take to your doctor.

If you answered "yes" to any question, you should see your doctor. You may be experiencing the symptoms of a condition called benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), which is an enlargement of the prostate gland.

Affecting one out of three men over the age of 50, symptomatic BPH can be caused by a *tightening* of muscles inside the prostate. These tightened muscles can slow the flow of urine, leading to the kinds of urinary symptoms described above.

There are three basic treatment options for symptomatic BPH: "watchful waiting," which entails having regular checkups over time; surgery; and medication.

HYTRIN: A New Treatment Option

HYTRIN is a once-a-day medication that can rapidly treat bothersome BPH symptoms. HYTRIN works by *relaxing* the muscles that have tightened in the prostate, increasing urine flow and decreasing urinary symptoms. With HYTRIN, you can see improvement in 2 to 4 weeks.

HYTRIN can cause a sudden drop in blood pressure at the beginning of treatment (or if you miss doses and then start taking the medication again). You may feel dizzy, faint, or "light-headed," particularly after getting up from a chair or bed.

If you have any urinary symptoms, see your doctor. Only your doctor can properly diagnose symptomatic BPH (or other conditions such as prostate cancer).

And, only your doctor can treat your bothersome BPH symptoms with HYTRIN. *For FREE information on symptomatic BPH and HYTRIN, please call* **1-800-447-1116**

Please see patient information on adjacent page.

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ASK YOUR DOCTOR TODAY ABOUT **HYTRIN®** (terazosin HCl)

301-500-1361C1

HYTRIN®
(terazosin HCl)

PATIENT INFORMATION ABOUT HYTRIN® (HI-TRIN)

Generic Name:
terazosin (ter-A-zo-sin)
hydrochloride

When used to treat
BENIGN PROSTATIC
HYPERPLASIA (BPH)

Please read this leaflet before you start taking HYTRIN. Also, read it each time you get a new prescription. This information should NOT take the place of a full discussion with your doctor. You and your doctor should discuss HYTRIN and your condition before you start taking it and at your regular check-ups.

HYTRIN is used to treat benign prostatic hyperplasia or BPH. HYTRIN is also used to treat high blood pressure (hypertension). This leaflet describes HYTRIN only as a treatment for BPH.

What is BPH?

The prostate is a gland located below the bladder. It surrounds the urethra (you-REETH-rah), which is a tube that drains urine from the bladder. BPH is an enlargement of the prostate gland. The symptoms of BPH, however, can be caused by an increase in the tightness of muscles in the prostate. If the muscles inside the prostate tighten, they can squeeze the urethra and slow the flow of urine. This can lead to symptoms such as:

- a weak or interrupted stream when urinating
- a feeling that you cannot empty your bladder completely
- a feeling of delay when you start to urinate
- a need to urinate often, especially at night, or
- a feeling that you must urinate right away.

Treatment options for BPH

There are three main treatment options for BPH:

- Program of monitoring or "Watchful Waiting". Some men have an enlarged prostate gland, but no symptoms, or symptoms that are not bothersome. If this applies, you and your doctor may decide on a program of monitoring including regular check-ups, instead of medication or surgery.
- Medication. There are different kinds of medication used to treat BPH. Your doctor has prescribed HYTRIN for you. See "What HYTRIN does" below.
- Surgery. Some patients may need surgery. Your doctor can describe several different surgical procedures to treat BPH. Which procedure is best depends on your symptoms and medical condition.

What HYTRIN does

HYTRIN relaxes the tightness of a certain type of muscle in the prostate and at the opening of the bladder. This may increase the rate of urine flow and/or decrease the symptoms you are having.

- HYTRIN helps relieve the symptoms of BPH. It does NOT change the size of the prostate, which may continue to grow. However, a larger prostate does not necessarily cause more or worse symptoms.
- If HYTRIN is helping you, you should notice an effect on your particular symptoms in 2 to 4 weeks of starting to take the medication.
- Even though you take HYTRIN and it may help you, HYTRIN may not prevent the need for surgery in the future.

What you should know while taking HYTRIN for BPH

WARNINGS

HYTRIN Can Cause A Sudden Drop in Blood Pressure After the VERY FIRST DOSE. You may feel dizzy, faint, or "light-headed" particularly after you get up from bed or from a chair. This is more likely to occur after you've taken the first few doses, but can occur at any time while you are taking the drug. It can also occur if you stop taking the drug and then re-start treatment.

Because of this effect, your doctor may have told you to take HYTRIN at bedtime. If you take HYTRIN at bedtime but need to get up from bed to go to the bathroom, get up slowly and cautiously until you are sure how the medicine affects you. It is also important to get up slowly from a chair or bed at any time until you learn how you react to HYTRIN. You should not drive or do any hazardous tasks until you are used to the effects of the medication. If you begin to feel dizzy, sit or lie down until you feel better.

- You will start with a 1 mg dose of HYTRIN. Then the dose will be increased as your body gets used to the effect of the medication.
- Other side effects you could have while taking HYTRIN include drowsiness, blurred or hazy vision, nausea, or "puffiness" of the feet or hands. Discuss any unexpected effects you notice with your doctor.

Other important facts

- You should see an effect on your symptoms in 2 to 4 weeks. So, you will need to continue seeing your doctor to check your progress regarding your BPH and to monitor your blood pressure in addition to your other regular check-ups.
- Your doctor has prescribed HYTRIN for your BPH and not for prostate cancer. However, a man can have BPH and prostate cancer at the same time. Doctors usually recommend that men be checked for prostate cancer once a year when they turn 50 (or 40 if a family member has had prostate cancer). These checks should continue even if you are taking HYTRIN. HYTRIN is not a treatment for prostate cancer.
- About Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA). Your doctor may have done a blood test called PSA. Your doctor is aware that HYTRIN does not affect PSA levels. You may want to ask your doctor more about this if you have had a PSA test done.

How to take HYTRIN

Follow your doctor's instructions about how to take HYTRIN. You must take it every day at the dose prescribed. Talk with your doctor if you don't take it for a few days, you may have to restart it at a 1 mg dose and be cautious about possible dizziness. Do not share HYTRIN with anyone else; it was prescribed only for you.

Keep HYTRIN and all medicines out of the reach of children.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT HYTRIN AND BPH, TALK WITH YOUR DOCTOR, NURSE, PHARMACIST OR OTHER HEALTH CARE PROVIDER.

Ref. 03-4458-R1-Revised Sept., 1993

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Letters to the Editor

Moles

Dear Sir: Richard Conniff's March article was filled with cruel and environmentally unsound "solutions" to dealing with unwanted moles. It encouraged hatred rather than understanding of the animals. The poor maligned creatures are, in fact, nature's little tillers.

Problems occur with "nuisance" wildlife only when the animals run afoul of humankind. People who want flawless lawns should put in Astroturf.

Sandra Krebs
Virginia Beach

Dear Sir: Some years ago I opened the door leading from our basement into the garage, and in scurried a small, very dark, furry creature that immediately hurried for cover.

About a week later, I was again in the basement when out walked the mole, seeming slow and confused and, I was sure, hungry. I scooped the creature into a box, covered it with a piece of screen and put in some food and water, intending to return him to the nearby woods.

I soon heard a strange, canary-like, high trilling. There was my mole, head lifted high, throat vibrating, a beautiful sound coming forth. This went on for 15 or 20 minutes without pause, while I stood there, unbelieving. Then silence. I looked again, and my little musical friend was lying dead.

Louise Metcalf
Dennis, Massachusetts

Conspiracy Theorists

Dear Sir: When there is a great deal of smoke, one wonders if there is fire. Conspiracies of silence are by no means rare.

When the *Maine* blew up in 1898, quite a few concluded Spain was not to blame. Try to find this in the media of the day. The same goes for the sinking of the *Lusitania*. A fair number in the inner circle knew she carried contraband and had guns, but until Colin Simpson wrote his book most of us were in the dark.
Beverly C. Meyer
Walnut Creek, California

Dear Sir: It appears that the *New Yorker* anticipated Mr. Wernick's conspiracy article–in its January 17 issue [below].
Julia Darby
San Francisco

Wieliczka Salt Mines

Dear Sir: The ventilation system that solved the methane hazard described in John Dornberg's article brought a new threat to the rock salt carvings in Wieliczka's St. Anthony's Chapel, one of Poland's most significant religious sites.

Recently, the chapel's contents have deteriorated badly due to salt dissolution. When relative humidity reaches about 75 percent, the rock salt begins to absorb moisture rapidly from the air, eroding surface details, eventually destroying the carvings.

A study by Polish and American scientists shows the damage was being caused by airborne moisture from the mine's ventilation system. Dehumidification of entering air would probably solve the problem, or at least help to preserve this unique site for future generations.
Rayford P. Hosker jr.
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Oak Ridge, Tennessee

Men's hats

Dear Sir: Bruce Watson states that the term "hat trick . . . originated in British cricket; three goals in a game earned the scorer a hat from the local club."

One does not score "goals" in a cricket game, but "runs." "Hat trick" does not apply to the team that is "in" and attempting to score runs but to the team that is fielding. More specifically, it refers to the bowler's feat of getting three batsmen out. In other words, "getting three wickets."

The "scorer" in cricket merely records the score and would not be in a position to win a hat–or anything but a free tea.
Edmund A. Fairhead
Falls Church, Virginia

Phenomena, comment and notes

Dear Sir: I am thrilled and pleased that you see fit to preserve the integrity of our system of weights and measures. As president and only member of the merged Anti-Metric Society of America (AMSA) and the Society for the Prevention of Universal Metric Obfuscation in our Nation and Industry (SPUMONI), I applaud any efforts to ward off evil efforts to "metrify" America.
John B. Flentz
Carlsbad, California

World War II posters

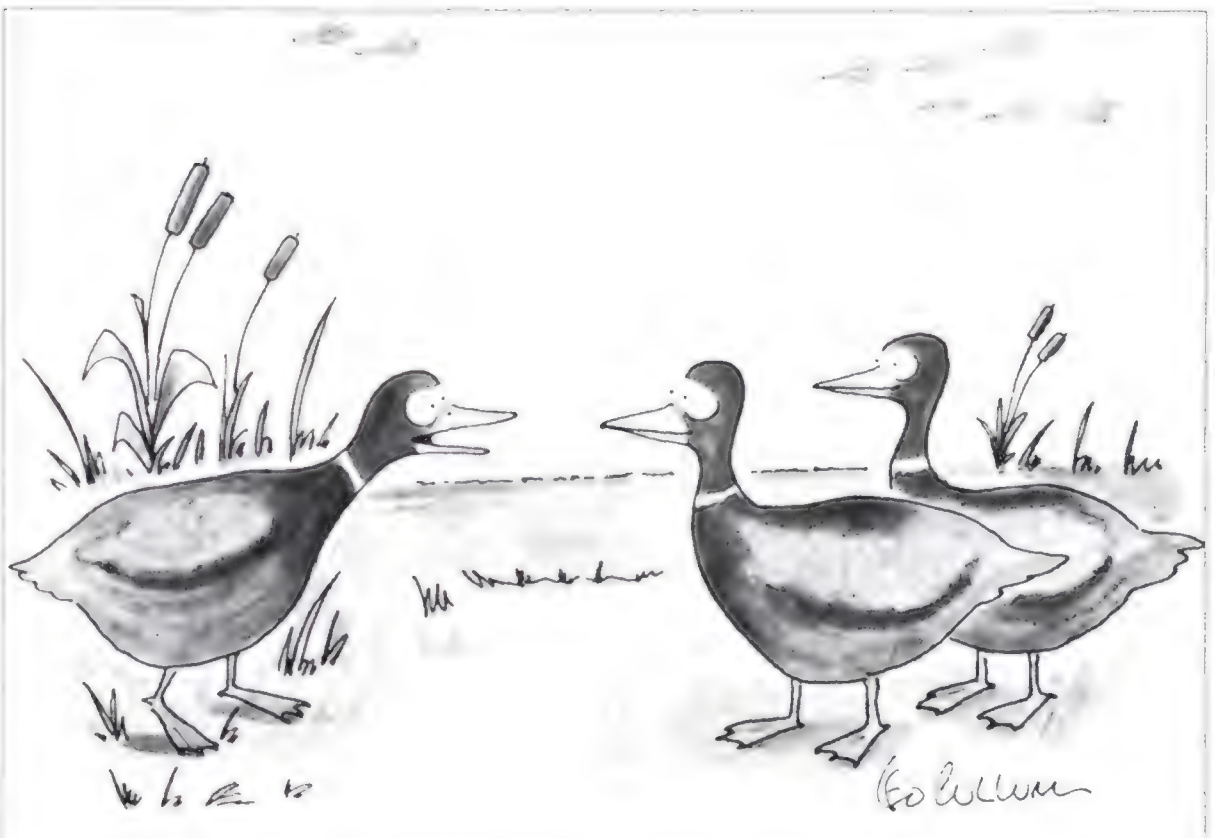
Dear Sir: I was one of the first female welders at Sun Shipyard in Chester, Pennsylvania, during World War II. In leather overalls and metal hats, we more than did our part. The harassment we put up with would produce multimillion-dollar lawsuits today, but we became hardened quickly and gave it back as fast as it was given.
Edna S. Lipinski
Tucson, Arizona

Tsunamis

Dear Sir: When the great wave struck Hilo on April 1, 1946, I was an Aerographer's Mate 2d Class attached to the Naval Air Station on Attu. The senior weather officers had returned stateside and the only remaining commissioned officer was on leave. I, age 20 with two years' experience, had become senior weatherman.

Early that morning a Teletype message advised of a major undersea earthquake nearby that would likely trigger tidal waves in the area: alert all personnel. I notified the base commander, a Navy captain, and the Army commander. These two men of awesome rank asked me to predict when and where the tidal wave would likely strike and what precautions they should take. I told them I knew little about such waves. They decided to post observers on the waterfront, with instructions to fire shots if they saw the wave. But I did know tidal waves moved at several hundred miles per hour and that observers, if they did see one, would drown before they could give the alarm. My advice was again asked, and I said the only thing to do would be to send all personnel to high ground.

Everyone was duly required to spend the rest of the day and much of the night in a small theater a few hundred feet up the side of a hill, in cramped lodgings with little food or diversion, griping as only the military can. Word got around it was "that young weather guy's idea," which didn't make me particularly popular, especially as nothing dramatic occurred. Within days I was happy to receive my transfer back home.
Joseph F. Fahey jr.
Stamford, Connecticut



Leo Cullum © 1994 *The New Yorker* Magazine Inc.

"The President definitely shot Carl, but they say there was a second gunman."

Around the Mall and beyond

The slick and shiny Extra 260 flown by national aerobatic champion Patty Wagstaff takes its place at NASM

Her name is Patty Wagstaff and she's quick with a warming grin. But when I heard she was a national champion whose sport includes spins, loops, compulsories and freestyles, this winter's figure skating melodrama flashed through my mind and I winced. Not to worry; this champion displays no hangups and is refreshingly modest about herself and her sport.

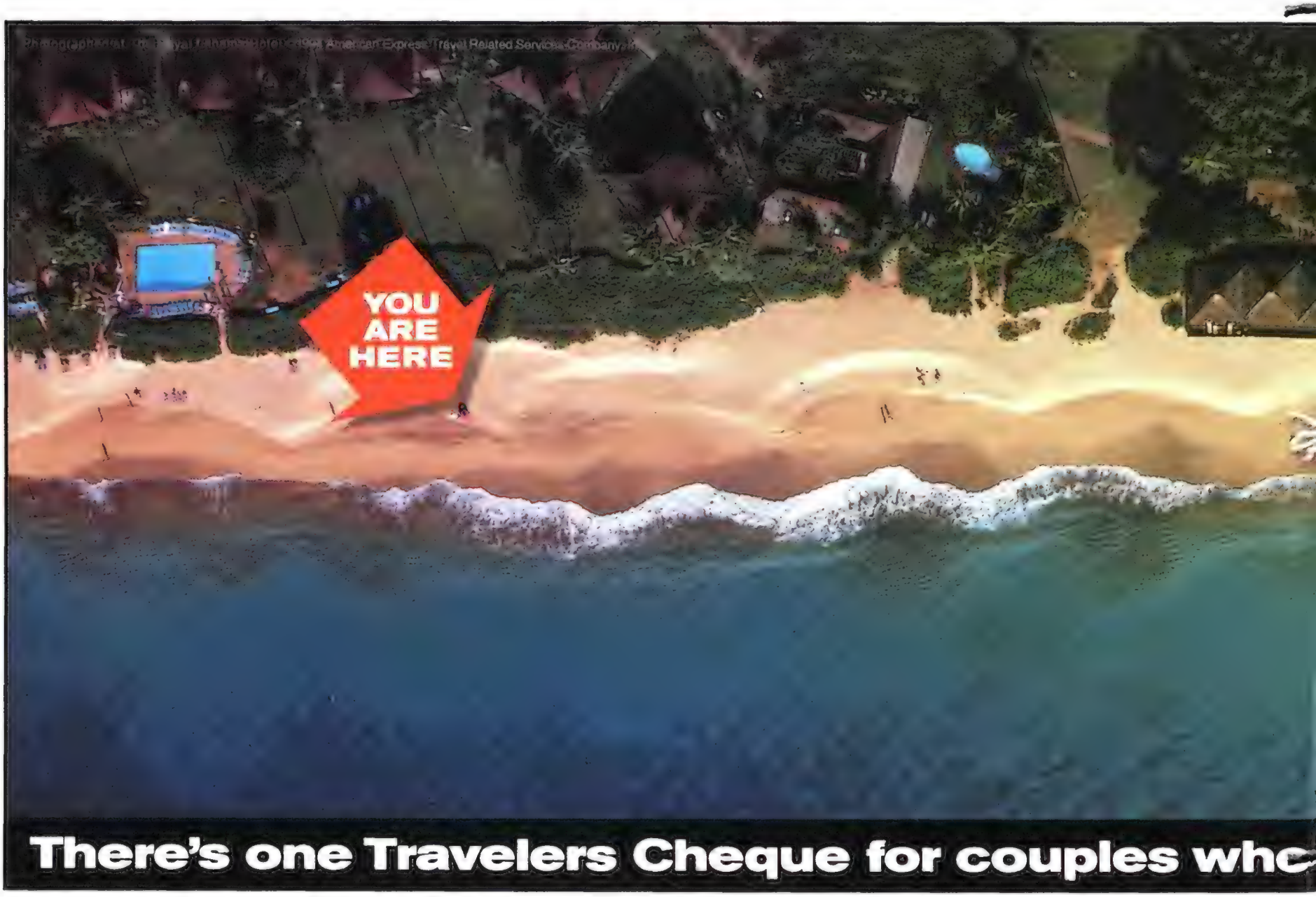
The sport is called aerobatics, and Wagstaff has a good chance of being considered the best aerobatics pilot in the world. She's now won the national championship three times. She was the first woman to win it. Keep an eye on her in August. That's when the U.S. aerobatic team will compete with other national teams in Hungary. Wagstaff has been on the team five times.

When I met her, she was explaining her airplane to a group of admirers. It had been put on display on the second floor of the National Air and Space Museum, where it will stay until next March. It's called an Extra 260, and it's in hot company–right under Jimmy Doolittle's Curtiss racer, and just behind Amelia Earhart's red Lockheed Vega in which, in 1932, she became the first woman to fly the Atlantic solo. The brightly colored Extra–the name is that of its designer-builder, Walter Extra of Germany–can hold its own. It is slick as wet soap, expensive, and demonstrates the huge leaps in aeronautics that have taken place since World War II. Examples: construction that blends materials varying from wood to carbon-fiber; ailerons beefed up by aerodynamic boosters called spades; a wing that works both upside down and right side up.

It has to. For its pilot has been putting that aircraft through maneuvers that an old-time barnstormer could only imitate by accident, and at the sacrifice of his Jenny. Picture a plane heading straight up, stalling out, then sliding down backward–tailfirst. That's a routine figure in these dazzling exhibitions, and Patty seems to think it's not too tough. "You use your elevator," she told me. "Just nudge the stick gently and hold it so the pressure won't tear it out of your hand. Pull back a little if you want to slide out right side up. Keep your wings level with rudder and ailerons, but remember you have to reverse the ailerons because you're going backward. And of course you can tailslide with the stick forward if you want to come out inverted. . . "

Having flown a bit, I could picture–queasily–what went on.

"Aerobatics is big stuff nowadays," said Dorothy Cochrane, curator of the Wagstaff display. "Airshows don't get the same attendance as baseball, but they



beat the NFL by almost ten million." I found that hard to believe, but she showed me figures that proved it for 1989. It's grown since. Aerobatic performances are now highly organized. Competitions are judged much like figure skating. Instead of an ice rink, competitors keep within a 1,000-meter cube of airspace. Given airspeeds of more than 250 miles per hour, that's as cramped as jumping on a trampoline in a clothes closet. Here a plane goes through compulsory figures–loops, rolls, spins and various combinations of them–then moves on to freestyle and even an unknown program: a schedule of maneuvers handed out only a few hours before the performance, so the competitors don't have time to practice.

This produces a heart-stopping spectacle on high, while below, thousands crane their necks and quietly wonder how people can do this.

A small film that runs at the NASM display shows Patty doing her trademark maneuver–a series of snap rolls while she's orbiting in a perfect 360-degree circle and all at the same altitude. You see her move the control stick to her left, lifting her right wing. Then you see her pumping the stick forward and back as her legs shove the rudder left and right in coordination. These relatively violent movements produce snap rolls–one after the other.

The strain on Patty is very evident. The camera catches her gasping, gritting her teeth and being hurled around the cockpit. When I met her, I asked whether her flying suit was pressurized to keep her from blacking out. She shook her head. Though she takes eight to ten Gs (eight to ten times the force of gravity) during her flights, she points out that the pressures are only momentary. "And they come in all directions," she said, "so the blood is flung into my head one moment and my feet the next. No pressure suit could help much." "Do you lose vision?" I asked. "I don't really black out," she said. "I can catch it with my stomach muscles and keep the blood up there. I've never redded out." That's the pilot's expression for the reddish haze that dims vision when you are pushed upward by negative Gs.

This is a brutally physical business. One pilot writes that at the end of a display he taxis to the flight line, then "I slide the canopy open, haul myself out, and stand there . . . while the world slides slowly back into focus."

Wagstaff was the first woman aerobatic champion, and could be the best of all.

Yet aerobatic pilots come back to it again and again, everywhere there's a competition or an airshow. They have no particular season but follow decent weather. Wagstaff herself flew in 22 airshows and six competitions last year.

Aerobatics isn't new. All early aviators

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wanted to get away from the straight-and-level technique of the first flights and make their fragile craft "push the envelope." In 1913–ten years after the Wright brothers first flew at Kill Devil Hill in North Carolina–a Frenchman, Célestin Adolphe Pégoud, managed to get his Blériot monoplane upside down, on purpose, using a method that a weekend pilot today would never try.

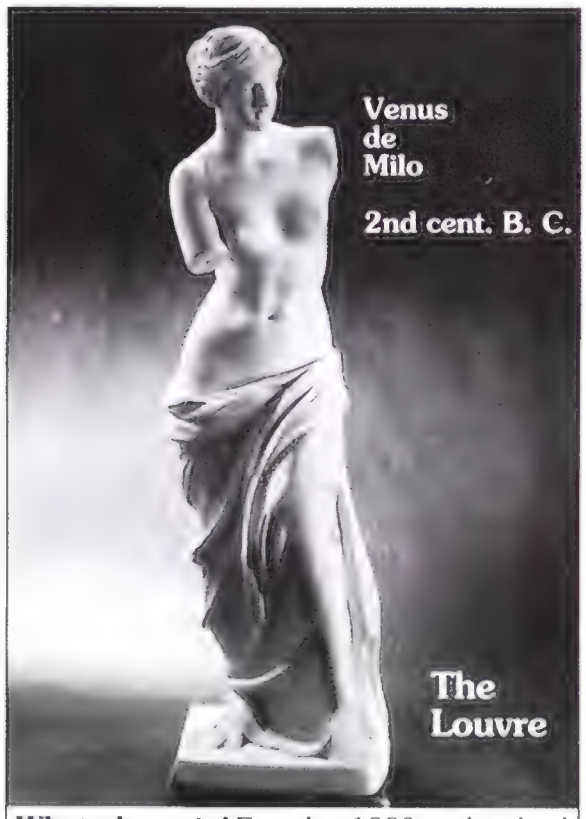
The Blériot wouldn't roll over, so Pégoud strapped himself into his cockpit (an unusual precaution back then), pushed its nose forward and held it there, going from level flight into a vertical dive, then past the vertical to the inverted. Since its wing had lift in only one direction, the plane sagged earthward as it flew, wheels in the air, pilot waving cheerily from the cockpit.

As aircraft speed increased, so did stresses that could tear off a wing. So aerobatics languished for years. But as construction became stronger, planes could stand the stresses of today's aerobatic figures. Like the Lomcevak. That's a Slovakian word, or so the pilots say, for the way you feel after gulping down a good slug of potato vodka. The maneuver has the same effect on the pilot–and on the watchers. Here's roughly what happens: the plane pulls up into a steep climb and is put into several outside snap rolls. It begins to tumble gyroscopically around the spinning propeller. As the airspeed decreases, the aircraft tumbles into a flat spin upside down. Finally the pilot dives and (gratefully) recovers. Warning: don't try this at home.

Patty Wagstaff came late to aerobatics, though she's known airplanes since the time she was 4 years old and sat in her dad's lap while he flew a B-25 medium bomber. She grew up in Japan, lived also in Australia and Europe, and now calls Anchorage, Alaska, home. It was there that her lawyer husband, Robert Wagstaff, taught her to fly. Later she had a lesson in simple aerobatics and, she says, "I was hooked." Today, Patty again travels the world. Her own organization, Patty Wagstaff Airshows Inc., is based in Tucson, Arizona.

Her plane was donated to the Smithsonian in memory of Patty's father-in-law, Robert W. Wagstaff. BFGoodrich Aerospace, Michelin and Aircraft Spruce and Specialty helped with the tab. Go pay your respects. But Sunday pilots best keep their rental Pipers and Cessnas well away from a Lomcevak.

Edwards Park



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Phenomena, comment and notes

In the Arizona desert, an ambitious project to mimic Earth's systems flies in the face of modern science

Everyone who's ever been there describes it as being "way out in the desert," but it's really only 15 minutes past the last traffic light in Tucson. Drive by grazing cattle scattered across the sparse Arizona pasture, top a hill and there it is: a set of gleaming white buildings that looks for all the world like a refugee from a science fiction movie. This is Biosphere 2–surely one of the most intriguing enterprises around. It's nothing less than an attempt to build a closed, sustainable environment in which man-made "natural systems" are so well balanced that human beings can live in it indefinitely. It is supposed to be a miniature Earth in every way, an intent reflected in its name–Earth is reckoned to be Biosphere 1. The project was designed as a prototype of our future home, for a time when we establish colonies in outer space. It is also a tool for demonstrating how much we know, and *don't* know, about the workings of Biosphere 1.

You may recall that in September 1993 eight biospherians emerged from the complex after a two-year stint inside. If you've followed the news, you've probably heard other things–about upheavals in its management, even claims that it is connected with weird survivalist cults. There are also charges that it doesn't really represent science but is more akin to something like Disneyland.

As I passed through the entrance gate, I realized that questions about who is behind the project didn't interest me much. But criticisms relating to the science being done there were definitely on my mind. This is, after all, a multimillion-dollar venture. Is it really, as some people claim, just a show or, even worse, a scientific fraud?

From the parking lot, Biosphere 2 looks like a huge greenhouse perched on a two-story concrete bunker. The upper level–3.2 acres of floor space under a glass greenhouse–contains five miniature ecosystems. Hidden within the lower levels are machines that keep the whole system going. When the project is in operation, the only thing that enters from the outside (in principle, at least) is energy: sunlight and electricity.

From a purely scientific view, Biosphere 2 is an incredibly ambitious undertaking. Scientists are just beginning to understand some of the mechanisms that drive Earth's interdependent systems. But, given our profound ignorance of this subject, can we really expect to reproduce the biosphere on the scale of a few acres?

Fortunately, I had the perfect host to give me some insight into these questions. Jack Corliss, chief scientist at Biosphere 2, is a husky, jovial kind of guy, with gray hair and beard. He also has a taste for research that's off the beaten track. During the 1970s he led the expedition that discovered bizarre hot-spring vents on the floor of the Pacific. In landlocked Arizona he is engaged in another kind of exploration.

"Every ecosystem depends on the rest of the planet to supply it with materials and to absorb its wastes," he explains. "Here we're trying to close off a small volume and replace the rest of the Earth with machines. It's a tremendously complicated problem."

The first things I saw upon entering Biosphere 2 through its ground-level airlock were machines, piping, and concrete floors and pillars–it might as well be a factory basement. The machines that captured my attention first were the three station-wagon-size scrubbers. Like scrubbers in a factory smokestack, these devices react carbon dioxide in the air with lime to make a chalky substance called calcium carbonate (limestone). During the winter, when plants are less active, the scrubbers can be used to remove excess carbon dioxide from the air. If more carbon dioxide is needed in the summer, when the plants are growing rapidly, the process can be reversed by heating the limestone in a furnace.

The upper level of Biosphere 2, how-

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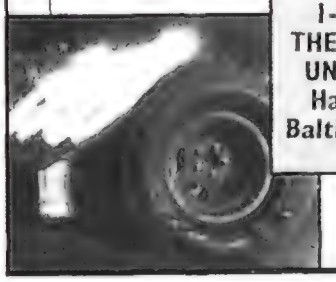
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Resembling a high-tech botanical garden, Biosphere 2 is the first attempt to create a sealed-off, self-sustaining world that needs only electricity and light from outside.

ever, is its most interesting area. Packed under the glass roof are a small ocean (complete with wave machines), a rain forest, an agricultural area, a savannah and a desert. Corliss and his colleagues think that the combined interaction of these ecosystems, with an assist from the machines below, should eventually produce a stable environment in which people could live comfortably. After the initial trial, Biosphere 2 scientists know about some of the problems that will arise as they try to make the system work.

"Out there," says Corliss, waving to the world beyond the glass wall, "oxygen and carbon dioxide have come into equilibrium with living things and the soil. In here, they'll also come to equilibrium eventually, but there's no guarantee that it will be the same."

Such was the case during the first trial. A month or so after the complex was sealed, the oxygen content of the air started to drop unexpectedly. Instead of cycling between plants and animals, it was taken up by bacteria in the soil. The oxygen level fell to 14 percent (as compared with 21 percent in the air we breathe at sea level), and more oxygen had to be introduced to keep the experiment going.

At the same time, the carbon dioxide level rose, climbing to more than ten times its normal concentration–the sort of thing encountered in a stuffy room filled with people. A lot of strange things happened because of the extra gas: plants, whose growth is normally limited by carbon dioxide levels in the air, sprouted up. In the rain forest, some trees grew so tall and spindly that they had to be propped up. The fresh concrete in the basement began absorbing carbon dioxide (something concrete normally does as it ages), further offsetting the carbon cycle. To counteract this trend, engineers had to run the scrubbers continuously and cached tree trunks and leaves (sources of stored carbon dioxide) throughout the lower floors.

As I wandered around this strange world, chatting with biologists collecting insects on the "savannah" and engineers tending their machines, I began to sense that what I was seeing wasn't at all what I had expected. I had come there prepared to visit a standard, though large-scale, scientific experiment. What I found was quite different and in many respects more interesting.

The builders of Biosphere 2, confronted with the task of successfully putting all the parts of an ecosystem together, had reverted to an old and revered style of solving problems: tinkering. Like the Wright brothers in their bicycle shop or Thomas Edison in his laboratory, the Biosphere 2 scientists started with a working model, pinpointed its problems and have begun fixing them. Then they will try again and fix again until they reach their goal.

Unfortunately, this approach goes directly against the grain of another way of attacking problems, one strongly favored in the United States since the success of the Manhattan Project in building the atomic bomb during World War II. With this approach, problems are solved by first gaining an understanding of the basic laws of nature that apply to them, and only then trying to use that knowledge to come up with a solution. Particularly at universities, this method has almost reached the level of holy writ in American science.

Both tinkering and the pure scientific approach have worked in the past–the former gave us the steam engine and the light bulb, the latter the transistor and genetic engineering. Understanding this dichotomy helps to put scientific criticisms of Biosphere 2 into perspective. It's true that the biospherians didn't have a clear measure of ambient conditions within the complex when the first trial began–they didn't seal it off until construction was nearly complete, so all sorts of local flora and fauna could have been inside when the building was closed.

How, the argument goes, can you understand where you are if you don't know where you started? Criticism of this sort (which I have heard from many mainline scientists) falls into the "right but irrelevant" category. If your goal is to tinker your way to the final product, it really doesn't matter where you start. It's where you end up that matters. (Of course, with this approach it's possible to succeed and still not know why the system works.)

Standing in the savannah of Biosphere 2, I began to realize that there is another way in which this project represents the scientific equivalent of political incorrectness. One of the emerging tenets of American pop culture is that anything that can be labeled "natural" is good, while anything connected with human ingenuity–anything representing human attempts to control and manage the environment–is bad. Nature, to this way of thinking, exists properly only when there are no people around. One consequence of this philosophy is the belief that it is impossible for humans to replicate natural ecosystems, that the best hope for us is to try to live in harmony with nature. Yet here I was, standing in what seemed to me to be an "in your face" project where machines in the basement replace much of nature–a place where humans are trying not only to use technology to duplicate nature but to do it well, with understanding.

I turned to Jack Corliss and asked, "Do you realize that what you're doing here is heresy?"

He looked around at the plants and scientists in the complex. "Yeah," he laughed, "that's what makes it fun."

James Trefil

The author teaches physics at George Mason University. His latest book is *A Scientist In the City* (Doubleday).

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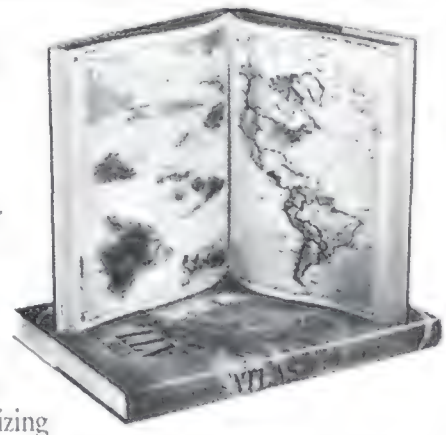

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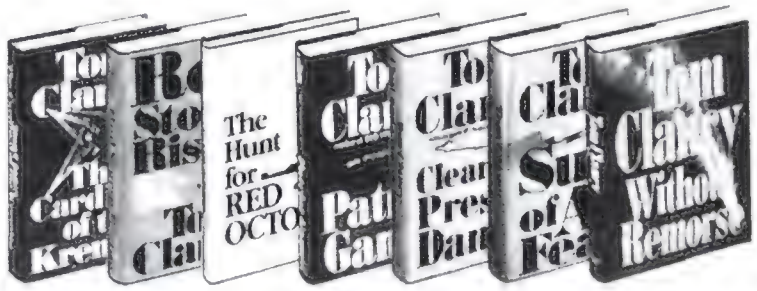

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Smithsonian highlights

Planning a Smithsonian visit?

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Begin your visit at the Smithsonian Information Center's Associates' Reception Desk–open 9 A.M.- 4 P.M. daily–in the Castle. The Court dining room, located in the National Museum of Natural History, offers buffet service daily, 11 A.M.- 3 P.M. The Castle's Commons dining room will reopen in early May.

Most Smithsonian museums are open 10 A.M.- 5:30 P.M. daily, except December 25. Hours at the National Zoo are 9 A.M.- 4:30 P.M. daily for buildings, and 8 A.M.- 8 P.M. for grounds.

Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month

A variety of activities and programs are planned for May. For recorded information, call (202) 357-4574 starting May 1.

Special May exhibits, events

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

Contemporary Porcelain from Japan (through September 5) Innovative and varied porcelain vessels. See *Highlights continued*, page 22.

Korean Arts of the Eighteenth Century: Splendor & Simplicity (through May 15) Exhibit of masterworks displayed in settings that demonstrate their ceremonial and everyday use.

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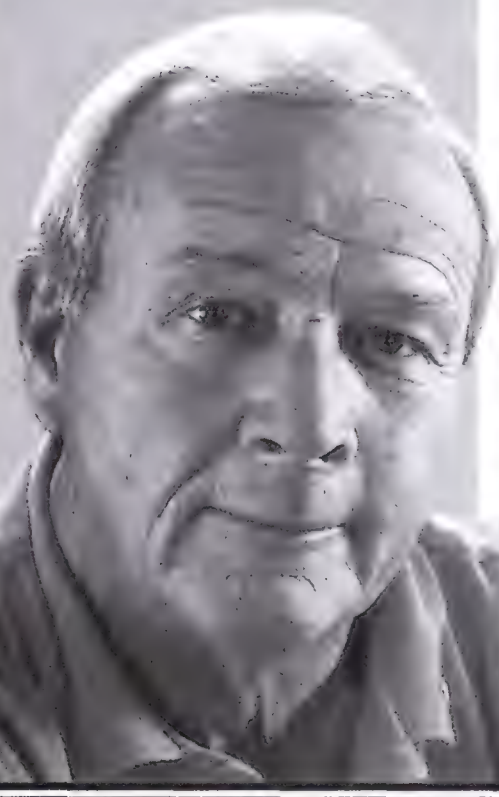

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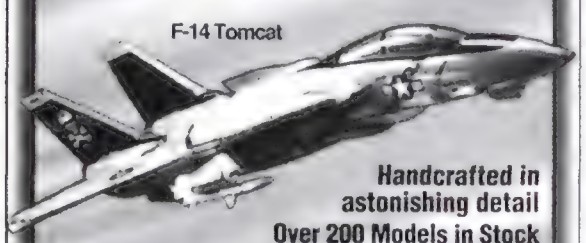

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Freer Gallery of Art
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National Museum of African Art
Face of the Spirits: Masks from the Zaire Basin (through September 25) Exhibition opens a window on the culture and artistry of the peoples of the Zaire Basin.

National Air and Space Museum
Patty Wagstaff–National Aerobatic Champion (through March 1995) Exhibit features Wagstaff's Extra 260 aircraft. See *Around the Mall*, page 12.
Beavers (6:45 P.M., Friday-Sunday) Imax film set in the Canadian Rockies follows the work and play of a family of beavers.

National Museum of Natural History
The Tongass: Alaska's Magnificent Rain Forest (through July 10) SITES photographic exhibit captures the remarkable lushness of this national treasure.
Giant Squids (opens May 27) Permanent exhibition explores and interprets the mystery, complexity and beauty of the world's largest invertebrates.

National Zoological Park
Amazonia Permanent installation re-creates a microcosm of the world's largest rain forest and river habitat.

National Museum of American History
Science in American Life New permanent exhibit tracks the advances and discoveries in science over the past 125 years.
Buffalo Soldiers: African-Americans in the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments (through May 29) Exhibition honors the black soldiers who served in the post-Civil War Army on the Western frontier.

National Postal Museum
The Smithsonian's newest museum, located next to Union Station on Capitol Hill, presents exhibitions tracking the history of the nation's mail service.

Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden
Directions–Sue Coe (through June 19) Large-scale narrative drawings explore issues such as violence against women, racism, capitalism and war.

National Museum of American Art
Thomas Cole: Landscape into History (through August 7) Retrospective of the work of the father of the Hudson River school of painting. See page 98.
North American Wildflowers: Watercolors by Mary Vaux Walcott (through August 29)

A selection of 50 watercolors by the American artist-naturalist.

Renwick Gallery
American Crafts: The Nation's Collection (runs indefinitely) Pieces by nationally prominent artists in a variety of craft media.

National Portrait Gallery
Recent Acquisitions (May 6-December 4) Portraits of notable Americans selected from recently acquired works.
Reporting the War: The Journalistic Coverage of World War II (through September 5) Paintings, photographs, recordings, manuscripts and memorabilia.

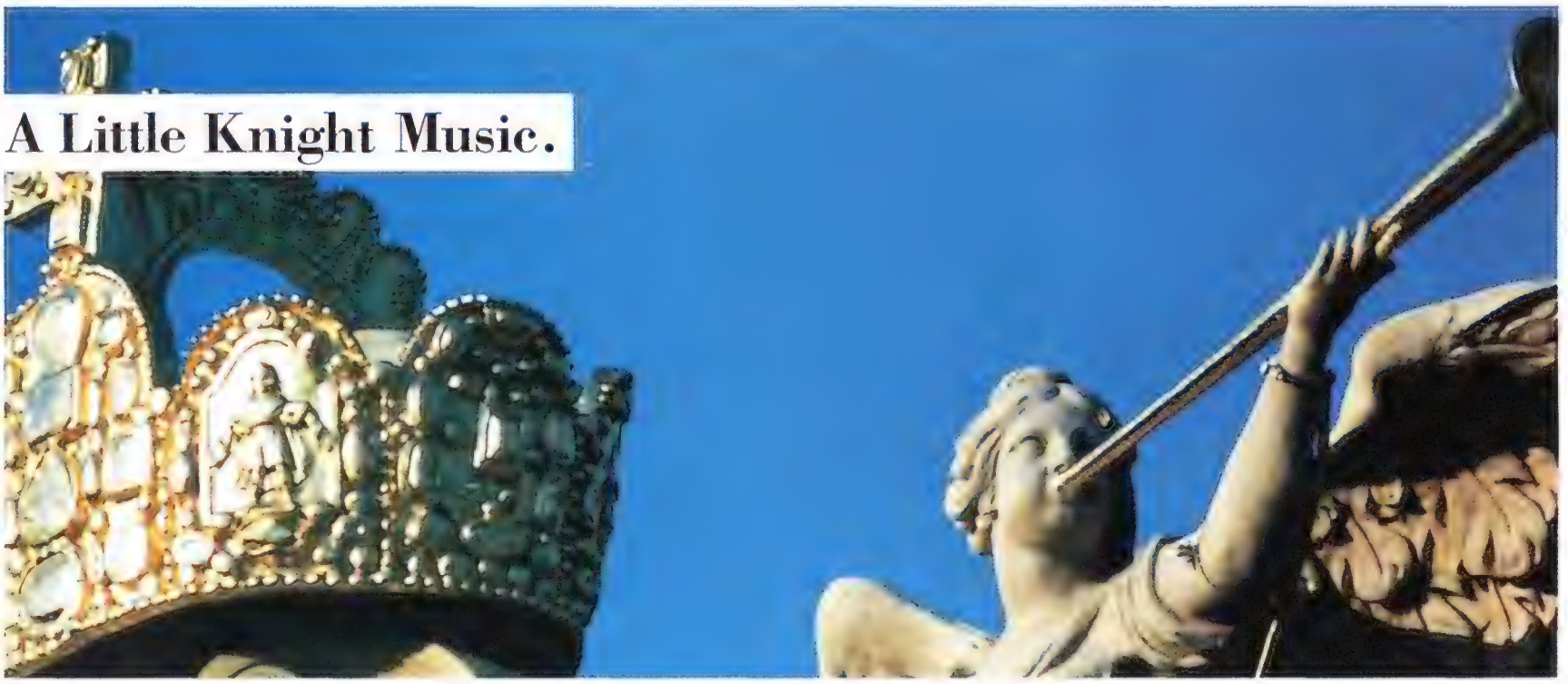
Anacostia Museum
Malcolm X: Man, Ideal, Icon (through June 1) Exhibition offers an in-depth look at the life and philosophy of the well-known African-American leader.

Elephants of Timbuktu, first of three Smithsonian Expedition television specials, airs 8 P.M., Friday, May 20, on the Arts and Entertainment Network.

Arts and Industries Building
Discovery Theater
The Velveteen Rabbit (May 3-June 11) Performances: Tuesday-Friday 10 and 11:30 A.M.; Saturday, 11:30 A.M. and 1 P.M. Live theater for young audiences (grades PreK-2). Call (202) 357-1500.

International Gallery,
S. Dillon Ripley Center
Talents of the Brush: Jill Sackler Chinese Calligraphy Competition (May 28-September 25) More than 100 prizewinning works selected from the 1990 and 1992 competitions held in Beijing.

Cooper-Hewitt Museum (New York)
Packaging the New: Design and the American Consumer, 1925-1975 (through August 14) The role of the designer during America's golden age of industrial design–selections from the museum's Donald Deskey Archive.



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The fine art of Japanese porcelain

"I am awed by the realization that the bright, translucent color will last virtually forever," says ceramist Amabe Kimiko. "My goal is to work freely as a painter in search of harmony among colors."

The production of porcelain in Japan dates back to the early 17th century, when white, fine-grained porcelain clay was first discovered in Arita. Called Imari ware after the port from which it was shipped, Arita porcelain became known throughout the world. Today the regions of Arita, Kutani and Tobe are major centers for contemporary porcelain artists. Some of the finest work of these modern ceramists is currently on display at the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery. "Contemporary Porcelain from Japan," on view through September 5, showcases 30 innovative and diverse porcelain vessels by 30 Japanese masters. Donated to the Sackler by the Japan Foundation, these pieces were made between 1972 and 1992 by members of the ceramic arts division of the Issuikai, a prominent Japanese artists' association.

Infusing traditional porcelain, such as Imari, Kakiemon, Kutani and Nabeshima, with a modern freshness, these artists have concentrated on mastery of materials and inventive use of techniques to create distinctive decorations and motifs: swirling galaxies of dots, bold striations, gilded flowers, lyrical landscapes. Blending old and new, they reinterpret established forms to forge their own expressive, contemporary styles.

Diane M. Bolz

Kutani-style plate with whimsically painted vegetables is by Amabe Kimiko.

Yoshita Minori applied gold leaf under enamel glaze to create clematis design.

Plate by artist Kinoshita Yoshinori employs rich palette of Kutani style.

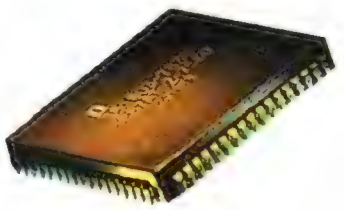
Sumita Masami used concentric spirals of dots as motif for jar titled *Remoteness.*

Linear grooves on vase by Tajima Shoni were made with a sharp bamboo blade.

Higashi Kuniaki used a marbleizing technique to suggest blossoming flowers.

Ming dynasty Chinese porcelain inspired design on a bowl by Fujiwara Shigeru.

Parlez-Vous Binary Code? The Engine And Transmission Do.



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By Richard Wolkomir

Hot on the trail of toxic dumpers and other eco-outlaws, Texas-style

El Paso's Hector Villa and his pollution posse are nailing violators, and seeking solutions on both sides of the Rio Grande

On the Sunday of the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Hector Villa thinks about bad air. By 11:30, when he drives across El Paso to mass, the smudge of pollution hanging over Ciudad Juárez, just across the Rio Grande, has evanesced in the sunlight. But the acrid smell of burning tires lingers.

In church, Villa worries. He has the suave good looks of a Latin movie actor, but he is a biologist, district manager for the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission. Worrying comes with the job. The commission's acronym is TNRCC, which some wags enunciate as "train wreck," because they doubt it can stay on track.

Villa, for instance, polices water pollution and illegal toxic dumping along nearly 400 miles of the border with Mexico. In the past few weeks he has become responsible for battling air pollution, too. Yet, to patrol 21,710 square miles of the Rio Grande Valley and surrounding desert, he and his 11 inspectors have only two battered jeeps, two pickups and a station wagon. Their equipment is mainly rubber gloves. Across the border–where much pollution originates–they have no authority at all.

Red tape and toxins on the border

Mexican sewage treatment is mostly nonexistent. And swarms of U.S.-owned *maquiladoras*–factories where Mexican workers assemble finished products from parts trucked from the States, then ship them back north–capitalize on pitifully low wages. By law, the U.S. firms have to ship their toxic wastes back to the States for disposal. But rather than pay for incineration at licensed facilities, some opt for the "arroyo disposal method," either in Mexico or Texas. American trucks loaded with wastes also sneak into Mexico for illegal dumping. Recently, when Villa set up one of his periodic road blocks, one driver abandoned his trailer in downtown El Paso to avoid inspection. Inside, inspectors found 171 drums of PCB wastes, which the FBI traced to a company based in Denver.

Villa hopes the new North American Free-Trade Agreement (NAFTA) will bring funds for improvements. But it might also bring even more industry to the border. And tomorrow, early, Villa has to pick up his boss at the airport and take him to a meeting on air pollution that is sure to be unfriendly.

The TNRCC chairman is flying in from Austin to give El Paso political leaders bad news: strict new regulations for the region. And Hector Villa will have to implement them. Simultaneously, his inspectors will be monitoring the Rio Grande for pollutants, as usual. They will make sure storage tanks and factories leak nothing toxic into the aquifers supplying water to El Paso and Juárez, even as both sister cities continue depleting the underground reservoirs at a ruinous pace. The inspectors will answer telephoned complaints, too, from citizens suspi-

Photographs by Robb Kendrick

cious about drums stored in their neighbors' yards or about trucks mysteriously driving into the desert. In the unregulated *colonias* outside the city, shack dwellers lacking public water or sewerage will watch their babies sicken from drinking polluted water.

Hector Villa is only 35 years old. But he already has ulcers. As he drives home from mass through the shrieking wind, he can still smell the fumes wafting from Juárez. The air is now so brown with flying grit that the mountains, usually stark to the north, are blanked out. If Villa were a believer in signs, he might see the dirty wind as an omen: another week requiring extra doses of his ulcer medicine. At 2 P.M. he turns on the television and loses himself in a Dallas Cowboys football game.

Monday morning the desert wind dies. But the smear of polluted air is back over Juárez. "Right now, there are no standards for air pollution on the other side of the border," Villa worriedly tells two journalists visiting his office for the week. Then he whisks the just-arrived TNRCC chairman, John Hall, off to the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) to meet the politicians.

"I'll tell you up front some very unpopular programs will have to be implemented in this region," Hall announces to the El Paso leaders, with Villa sitting beside him. The politicians listen stonily as Hall tells them El Paso is in serious noncompliance with the federal Clean Air Act. Unpaved roads and parking lots on both sides of the border put grit into the air, he says. So do wood stoves. Cars pump out tons of carbon monoxide and other pollutants. So do industries and small businesses. And, on bad days, the mountains cupping El Paso and Juárez hold in the brown cloud of pollution.

"Ninety percent of ozone reduction will have to come from small businesses and individuals because the big industries have already reduced their output by 75 percent," Hall says. "Lawn mowers don't have catalytic converters, for instance, so mowing your lawn for one hour can create as much pollution as driving a car 90 miles."

View across Rio Grande to Juárez typifies Villa's task: Texas refinery (foreground) meets strict air standards.

El Paso will have to inspect all vehicles for emissions. Gas stations will have to capture vapors as they pump, and pump either oxygenated gasoline or gasoline designed to reduce evaporation–at up to 5 cents more per gallon. Traffic flow must be improved. Small businesses such as print shops and dry cleaners will have to install antipollution equipment.

The politicians look grim. Then a grandfatherly man with a Texas twang introduces himself as Dr. Laurance Nickey, director of the El Paso City-County Health and Environmental District. "I need to tell you a story," he says. His story is about a federal EPA officer who came to El Paso in November 1985 to check on environmental problems. "He came down from the Potomac River, so I took him for a ride along the Rio Grande," Nickey says. It was cold that day, with snow on the ground. The Washington official looked across the brown trickle of river at shacks climbing a hillside. They were made of card-

Richard Wolkomir's most recent contribution to environmental activism is his Junkyard Bandicoots, *a book about endangered species.*

But he has no authority beyond the river (center) in Mexico, where much of the pollution originates.

board or adobe or old boards, each with a tin stack emitting black smoke. The smoke spired up to join a dark cloud hanging over the valley.

"Dr. Nickey!" the bureacrat exploded, staring at the shacks. "Why do you let this happen?"

"Well, for one thing," Nickey replied, "they're burning tires over there because mothers are trying to keep their babies from freezing to death. And, for another thing, that's Mexico." Six weeks later, Nickey received a letter from Washington. It said: "It is very likely that air pollution problems in Juárez could affect the El Paso air."

Nickey looks benignly at Hall. "We're 150 feet away from Juárez," Nickey says. "They're our neighbors, relatives, friends and business associates. I refer to us here as the other America, the forgotten Texas."

On his way back to the airport, the TNRCC chairman reflects on Nickey's point. "The border does present problems," he says. "But NAFTA will provide more funding, in the side agreements, than we've ever had to address these international issues."

Later, at a Mexican-style lunch spot with the visiting journalists, Villa spatters his shrimp dish with nuclear-strength salsa from a table decanter. "It's bad for my ulcers, but it's hard for a homeboy to do without Mexican food," he mutters. His grandparents, he says, emigrated from Mexico to El Paso, where more than 70 percent of the population is of Mexican ancestry. The family lived in a neighborhood called Smeltertown until high levels of lead turned up in residents' blood. Now Villa is troubled to see gang insignia scrawled on buildings in the new neighborhood where his family moved.

His father worked two jobs to send Hector to El Paso's private Catholic schools. Hector yearned to go to Notre Dame, idolizing the football team. But it cost too much. Instead, he worked his way through UTEP, studying biology and chemistry. He met his wife there, where she is now the comptroller. One of his sisters is an engineer, one is a teacher, and the third, a paralegal, studies nights for a bachelor's degree. He expects his 11-year-old brother will go to college, too.

Memento mori and a lifelong mission

In 1992, as Villa's father loaded pesticides into a truck, a container opened when he lifted it. He inhaled the powder. It instantly scarred his lungs. "My father could lift 400 pounds," Villa says. "But within three months he was dead–he was only 54 years old."

On his office wall, framed, is the eulogy he delivered at the funeral, thanking his father for being a friend and a guide. "If I ever retire, I want to teach poor kids in schools, helping them realize what they can achieve." Then his mobile telephone buzzes, and he hurries to his afternoon meetings. Air pollution is today's hot issue. But it is not the region's sole environmental problem.

Early on Tuesday morning, TNRCC biologist Elda Rodriguez stands knee-deep in the Rio Grande, filling a plastic bag with brown water. She is a sturdy 24-year-old, her black hair drawn back in a braid, her waders several sizes too large. The water in the bag will go to a laboratory to be tested for fecal coliform bacteria. Next, she dips a net into the river's muddy bed, scooping up a soil sample to test for heavy metals and organic pollutants. Then she wades ashore and assembles a "hydrolab," a device that looks like a car's shock absorber slung from a wire. Rodriguez heaves it into the river, where it records the water's acidity, temperature and dissolved oxygen concentrations. Whistling, she crawls back up the bank and pulls the hydrolab ashore. "We do these tests six times a year at eight stations along the river."

Nobody knows for sure what flows through the Rio Grande, she explains. To answer that question, TNRCC has launched a detailed study of the river, with 18 sampling stations between El Paso and Brownsville, on the Gulf of Mexico, and stations on 11 tributaries in the United States and 11 in Mexico. The Mexican National Water Commission has joined forces with the TNRCC to do the study, a first. The scientists are analyzing for 175

possible chemical pollutants in the water and sediments, and studying fish tissues, too.

So far, researchers have found suspiciously high numbers of deformed fish appearing near Laredo. And samplings indicate that, downstream of every twinned U.S.-Mexican city, levels of fecal coliform bacteria are high. In Texas' southern border region, among the country's poorest, the incidence of typhoid and infectious hepatitis is double and triple the state average.

That afternoon, Hector Villa drives his visitors into Mexico. He wants to show them why pollution levels rise downstream from cities. Juárez's population, Villa tells the journalists, is double El Paso's 500,000. His TNRCC jeep passes Juárez's new Restaurante McDonald's, the bull ring, potteries, *farmacias, dentistas.* Farther on, the car cruises by some of Juárez's 400 American-owned maquiladoras. Nearby sprawl the workers' shacks, many with inadequate water and sewerage.

Black flows the waste of Juárez

Abruptly, Villa swerves onto a gravel road running level to the horizon. To the left flows the brown Rio Grande. To the right, dark water gushes down a deep ditch. "This is the 'Black Ditch,'" he says. "Juárez has no sewage treatment, and all the waste from the entire city runs down this ditch." He stops the car where a discarded armchair stands primly in the ditch's noxious flow. The air has an acrid chemical tang. But down by the embankment the smell is different, stupefying.

"We're in Third World conditions here," Villa says, adding that besides fecal matter, industrial wastes find their way into the ditch, along with heavy metals. "A lot of the pollution is from maquiladoras, but nobody knows how much–the 'Fortune 500' maquiladoras have been improving on pollution; now most problems are from smaller companies." Villa leans against his vehicle's fender, looking glumly at the Black Ditch. "With NAFTA, there's a better chance of money coming to create an infrastructure, starting with sewage treatment," he says.

But Mexico has made environmental progress. Not long ago, Villa says, children scoured the Juárez dump for "green rocks," chunks of solidified xylene solvent they sniffed to get high. "That's been cleaned up."

Later, at his offices, Villa sends his visitors down the hall to talk with geologist Luis Salazar, Southwestern coordinator for River Watch, an environmental organization based in Montpelier, Vermont. River Watch recruits volunteers to test rivers for contamination and to work with communities and industries to clean the waters. The Rio Grande is the group's latest undertaking, and Villa donates office space because the understaffed TNRCC needs all the help it can muster.

Salazar, a Mexican citizen who lives in Juárez, says his Rio Grande operation is just getting started. "We plan to

On a typical day, inspector David Varela (below, left), visits a junkyard on a tip to check suspicious barrels.

In a Mexican *colonia* (above), a couple lives near smokestacks. The impoverished neighborhoods, lacking basic services, dot the border on both sides. In Texas (below), Villa counsels a woman whose well is fouled.

At a garment-washing factory near El Paso, innovative recycling processes are used: wastewater is sprayed into cleaning ponds, where bacteria digest various contaminants.

monitor a 50-mile stretch of the river and do it every 3 miles, to expand the TNRCC's testing, and we'll be doing it in both countries," Salazar says.

Eventually, River Watch volunteers will monitor the Rio Grande from Albuquerque, New Mexico, to Brownsville, Texas, where the river empties into the Gulf of Mexico. One reason a clean river is important, says Salazar, is that the Rio Grande feeds the aquifers that supply drinking water to El Paso and Juárez.

"Juárez plans to build a water treatment plant, but right now there is none," Salazar says, adding that Juárez pumps 55 million gallons of untreated wastes into the Black Ditch every day. Villages in the Mexican state of Chihuahua add their wastes, too. "This water contains solvents, paint and cleaners from the maquiladoras, and oil and antifreeze from auto shops in Mexico–they simply dump it into the drains," says Salazar. Although the water in the Black Ditch is a witches' brew, in the summer 70 percent of the flow is drained off to irrigate and fertilize crops. In the winter, officials open gates about 40 miles downstream of Juárez and pipe the sewage directly into the Rio Grande. "If they didn't, it would flood the small towns," Salazar says.

With the advent of NAFTA, he adds, the pollution situation is brightening. "The Mexican EPA, the Secretariat of Social Development, or SEDESOL, is getting serious with the maquiladoras," he says. He cites a factory that produced briefcase locks. Recently, a girl playing outside the factory stepped in a ditch and screamed: acid burned her foot so badly she needed three operations. Angry neighbors reported nosebleeds and headaches and surreptitious dumping in manholes at night. In December 1993, Mexico ordered the plant closed.

According to Villa, cooperation between Mexico and the United States is rising. Villa tells of receiving an anonymous telephone call in the summer of 1992: a waste hauler was dumping toxins between a cemetery and the Juárez airport. Villa notified his Mexican counterpart, and together they found 600 drums, some leaking. "They contained solvents, oils, acids, pesticides, every chemical you could imagine except radioactives. We told the maquiladoras' association to dispose of the stuff," says Villa. "You can't point fingers," he adds, noting that the United States creates pollution, too, and Texas has its own impoverished communities.

On Wednesday, after another morning of meetings, Villa drives his visitors down the Rio Grande to San Elizario to visit a colonia. Developers, he says, buy up cheap land outside towns' jurisdictions and sell tiny plots to poor people. Such colonias have no public water and no sewerage, leaving the residents–who put up shacks and adobes–to shift for themselves.

Villa stops at one crumbling shanty where a woman with a lined face sun-cured to leather is pumping water at a shallow well, watched by two mongrels. He greets her in Spanish, looking embarrassed. "I hate to come out here dressed like this," he tells his visitors. He has just come from a meeting and wears a dark suit, instead of his usual jeans and denim shirt. "I don't want these people I grew up with to think I'm some big deal descending on them." The water the woman pumps is tinged brown. Just eight feet away stands a privy. "That well's contaminated," Villa says to his visitors, shaking his head. "You can tell just by looking at it."

Similar makeshift houses crowd everywhere on the flat, baked landscape. Migrant workers live here, along

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with laborers, factory workers, maids and gardeners who have saved $1,000 for a down payment on the American dream of owning a place of their own. But the colonias breed disease.

Back at TNRCC headquarters, Sister Maribeth Larkin and Father Ramon Duran drop by. They are leaders of EPISO, the El Paso Interreligious Sponsoring Organization, which organizes poor people to campaign for such issues as affordable housing and good schools. EPISO has crusaded to bring public water and sewerage into the colonias. "People move from the city into the colonias to better themselves," says Sister Maribeth, a wiry woman with a focused gaze. She cites an example of the conditions people are trying to escape in poor downtown neighborhoods: recently, a warehouse storing chemicals caught fire and an entire district had to be evacuated. In such areas, she adds, families of six or eight crowd into one or two tenement rooms, with no indoor bathroom. A colonia seems a step up. Today about 279,000 Texans live in colonias. Disease is inevitable.

Father Duran says a University of Texas study of San Elizario found that 90 percent of its adult population carries hepatitis. Father Duran, a compact man with gray hair and a serious air, adds: "San Elizario has never had a public water supply, and its groundwater is totally contaminated with human waste from outhouses and crudely built septic systems–and it's on the Rio Grande water table." Residents may work in hotels and restaurants. "So their health has an impact on other people, too," Father Duran notes.

But colonia residents are now fighting for water. They have savored victory. The latest: on November 5, 1993, the Sparks colonia broke ground for a new public water system. Residents took off from work for the ceremony, carrying a banner that said, in Spanish: "If Sparks can get water, everybody can get water–don't give up hope!"

Later, Hector Villa says he worries there will not be enough water. Two aquifers under the Rio Grande, the Hueco Bolson and the Mesilla Bolson, supply fresh water to El Paso and Juárez. But the cities pump 200,000 acre-feet of water per year from the underground reservoirs, while the recharge rate is only about 10 percent of that volume. In some places, the groundwater level has already dropped 100 feet. Meanwhile, fast-growing Juárez recently announced plans to drill 20 more wells.

Villa has a plan: underneath the pure-water aquifers lie deeper layers of water, untouched because they are briny. "We have to start now using the brackish water for industry, and for drinking water, too," he says; the expense of desalinizing water for drinking is better than going dry. One factory has already followed his advice.

Juárez barrel dealer awaits buyers, who use drums for water storage; containers may have held chemicals.

Innovative solutions come out in the wash

On Wednesday afternoon, a TNRCC delegation visits International Garment Processors. The plant–which opened in May 1991–stands like a cement cube in the desert. Here, 712 employees churn newly made jeans with water, strippers, softeners, enzymes, bleach and pumice gravel, to give them the currently popular banged-up "stonewashed" look.

"Some laundry facilities like this in El Paso use a million gallons of good, precious water every day," says George Essenberg, the plant's water manager, as he leads the visitors past mountains of stacked jeans and huge computerized washing machines. Out back, he shows off the plant's wells, drilled 700 feet deep into the brackish water. It saves money and water: the factory's water costs 71 cents per 1,000 gallons, while factories using El Paso city water pay $1.70 per 1,000 gallons. A reverse-osmosis unit filters out dissolved salts.

Commandeering a van, Essenberg shows visitors where the used wash water goes: two ponds bigger than football fields, where bacteria digest bleaches, enzymes and other contaminants. After purification, the water irrigates a 65-acre commercial alfalfa field.

Back in the plant, the company's dignified founder, Cesar Viramontes, says it was Hector Villa who got him thinking about the future. "Five years ago I was considering expanding," he says. "Hector told me, 'Go look for brackish water!'" Viramontes believes his plant is a showplace. "In El Paso, plants in the washing industry are using up about ten million gallons every day, and then putting it down the sewer, contaminated," he says. "Next, we're going to try cogeneration, to make our own electricity, and we're talking about using the briny

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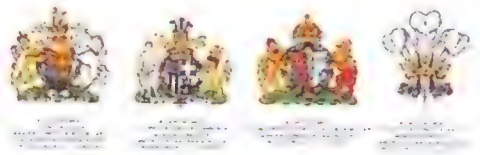

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Biologist Elda Rodriguez bags Rio Grande sample; water will be tested for levels of fecal coliform bacteria.

water from the reverse-osmosis unit for a shrimp farm!"

Elsewhere, TNRCC inspectors are carrying out their usual tasks, most of them more mundane than starting shrimp farms. Late in the afternoon Villa sends intern David Varela, a recent graduate of UTEP, to investigate a complaint about suspicious-looking drums in Socorro, a desert town. Varela, an easygoing civil engineer, finally finds the site on a tangle of unpaved roads dotted with houses gone to seed. It is an unlicensed junkyard, crowded with barrels and boxes of electronic components and discarded computer housings. "It comes out here onto the desert from the maquiladoras–this is the cheapest landfill," Varela says.

Nobody is around, so he crosses the fence and finds a dozen drums with such labels as "flux thinner" and "trichloroethane." One barrel is inscribed "*Hecho En Mexico*"–"Made in Mexico."

Abruptly, from behind a dilapidated garage, a man with a Zapata mustache and a belly hanging over his jeans comes running, yelling: "Get off my property–what do you think you're doing here? Get off. Now!"

"I'm sorry to have disturbed you by coming on your property," Varela tells the man calmly. "I'm an inspector for the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission, and we have reason to question whether you are storing hazardous wastes in these barrels."

The angry man ushers Varela over the fence. Varela offers his identification card. "As you can see," he says, pointing to a regulation cited on the back, "I am authorized to come on your property at any time to make an inspection if we have reason to believe there has been an infraction–I'm sorry if I disturbed you because I had the impression nobody was here."

The man says his barrels contain mineral oil, from transformers. He says he has purchase papers and promises to bring them to Varela's office in the morning.

Thursday morning. No junkyard owner. Varela calls him. Nobody answers. Hector Villa shrugs. "You'll have to go out again," he says. Similar tips and complaints come in all the time. The inspectors are spread thin. It is a nagging problem, and Villa is open to innovation.

For instance, in the summer he recruited youths who were at risk for joining gangs. He assigned the office's border affairs coordinator, Tracy Williams, to the project. She and Villa decided the key was helping these adolescents feel important. In the summer of 1993, the TNRCC had its first team of 25 at-risk youths sampling Rio Grande water for pollution and running computer analyses. One recruit came with an out-of-work uncle, assigned by the family to make sure the boy showed up. The chaperon wound up participating, too. If these teens graduate from high school, their summer experience will help them find jobs at places such as the El Paso wastewater treatment plant.

Thursday evening, Villa invites his visitors and the staff to stop at the L & J Cafe, located in his old neighborhood, where he arrives to a chorus of greetings. "This is a place where my dad used to hang out," he says. "Everybody comes here, from judges to blue-collar workers." Villa's uncle, a furniture upholsterer, announces: "This is the Mexican 'Cheers.'"

Over the twang of rockabilly songs from the jukebox, the TNRCC staff trades war stories. There was, for instance, the businessman seeking approval for a land sale who handed Villa an envelope stuffed with large bills. Villa handed the envelope back, grabbed the astonished man by the shirt and threw him out of the office.

Fleeing Rottweilers and facing guns

And there was the inspector investigating a toxic spill who stuck a Teflon sampling spoon into a pile of "black stuff" lying on the highway–when he pulled the spoon out, it had melted. An irate property owner sent his Rottweilers after one inspector. Another had to dive through his truck's open window to escape a bullmastiff. Some have even faced guns.

Friday morning Hector Villa shows up at the office sick. He is supposed to fly to Austin for a meeting. Instead, he makes a doctor's appointment.

Meanwhile, David Varela and Elda Rodriguez drive out to inspect the junkyard owner's documents and to extract oil samples from his drums, using long plastic tubes. The samples will go to a laboratory for testing.

Back at the office, Terry McMillan, manager of water

and wastes inspections, is talking on the telephone with Austin lawyers. In one case he is discussing, inspectors found two vans in downtown El Paso, driven by Mexicans who had purchased them in Colorado. They had paid only a few hundred dollars for the vans, but the vehicles were loaded with drums of toxic oils, which the seller expected them to dump for him in Mexico. The legal allowable concentration of PCBs in oil is 50 parts per million (PPM). This oil's PCB concentration measured more than 800,000 PPM.

"I tried to explain to them how toxic this stuff was, but they just shrugged," says McMillan, a sinewy geologist from Texas' Big Bend who wears jeans and cowboy boots. "Then I got Hector down here, and he explained in Spanish that if they touched the stuff they would lose key parts of their anatomy; he got their attention instantly."

At the moment, McMillan also is handling a complicated affair that began when a thief broke into an El Paso self-storage locker and then fled, terrified. Stacked inside were vats of fizzing chemicals. The locker also contained metals that could burst into flame. And poisonous gases. And acids that could detonate. Experts in "moon suits" had to be called in to clean up the mess.

Investigators traced the chemicals to a registered wastes handler in Colorado. But the legalities were proving labyrinthine. The handler was arguing that the chemicals still were usable and thus not illegal wastes. Also, a legal loop-the-loop now made McMillan himself liable for any damage caused by the chemicals. The last words McMillan has just heard from an Austin lawyer are: "I'm glad I'm not you."

Judge Roy Bean once administered justice in this part of Texas with a revolver and a rope. For Hector Villa's pollution posse, maintaining environmental law and order along the border is not so easy. But when the going gets tough. . .

On his way out of the office this Friday evening, a sick Hector Villa looks forward to a convalescent weekend watching his beloved Notre Dame play football on TV. At the door, he turns to say goodbye to his visitors: "I grew up here in El Paso," he explains. "I take this as a personal mission."

At Juárez dump, colonia residents scavenge in debris. Site presents unseen hazards: because the dump is not monitored, toxic compounds easily disposed of here can leach into groundwater–and the nearby Rio Grande.

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By Bil Gilbert

Pioneers made a lasting impression on their way West

But in spite of all the stories about hardship and heroism, the emigrants were far more likely to be scalped by outfitters than Indians

Joel Walker was a member of one of the large, restless Scotch-Irish families who were usually at the forefront of the westering movement of the American people. Landing at a Maryland port in 1728 as penniless land seekers, his forebears pioneered down the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia to the mountains of eastern Tennessee. Joel was born in 1797. While he and his younger brother Joe were still in their mid-teens, they fought under Andrew Jackson in Alabama at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, where the Tennessee Volunteers broke the power of the Creek Nation. Subsequently, the Walker brothers spent some time in the southern Appalachian wilderness, and in 1819 they brought 20 of their kinfolk to western Missouri. The family cleared land and built cabins in the vicinity of what is now the city of Independence in Jackson County. Joe Walker stayed there for less than a year before heading farther west and becoming one of the most celebrated of the fabled mountain men.

Joel Walker married and settled down in Jackson County to farm and raise a family. Eventually, he grew dissatisfied and decided to take his wife, Mary, and their four children by wagon to Oregon Territory. Leaving Independence on April 30, 1840, the Walkers joined three Presbyterian missionaries and an American Fur Company packtrain, which was heading West with supplies for trappers. At the headwaters of the Green River they met and were offered assistance by a veteran mountain man, Bill Craig, who had served under and been alerted to their coming by Joe Walker.

Craig took the party to Fort Hall, near present-day Pocatello, Idaho, where two of the Presbyterians decided to stop and spend the winter, doing what good they could for the local heathen. The third missionary and his family went on with the Walkers and Craig. They reached their intended destination, the Willamette Valley in Oregon Territory, in mid-September. Somewhere beyond the Snake River there was an encounter with unfriendly Indians, during which Mary, then five months pregnant, and the children hid on a sandbar in the willow scrub. No blood was shed, and Joel Walker laconically remarked that generally their 136-day trip from Missouri had been accomplished "without trouble."

Certainly, had the Walkers not made the trek in 1840, others soon would have. Emigrating to the ultimate West was an idea whose time had clearly come. But as a matter of indisputable historical record, Joel and Mary Walker were the first of some 200,000 overland emigrants who during the next 15 years–the epic covered-wagon period–started off for the West Coast. In 1841 there were 58 of them and the next year 125. Thereafter the trickle became a torrent. By 1852 more than 150,000 men, women and children had crossed the plains and mountains to Oregon and California. The great majority took the same route used by the Walkers, that is, following the established traders' trace up the Platte River to Fort Laramie in Wyoming and then crossing the Continental Divide through the South Pass to Fort Hall, where the Oregon and California trails diverged. It took most of them about as long to make the trip from Missouri as it had the Walkers–on average, 139 days to get to Oregon and 121 to California.

Dryland ports for prairie schooners

Nearly everyone halted to outfit at Independence or St. Joseph in Missouri. It wasn't long before those two communities–and, in the 1850s, Council Bluffs, Iowa–became roaring boomtowns, the dryland ports from which each spring thousands of prairie schooners set off across the seas of grass. On his way West in 1849, William Johnston paused at Independence where, he noted in his diary, "noise and confusion reigned supreme. Traders, trappers and emigrants filled the streets. . . . Mules and oxen strove for the right of way . . . while the loud cracking of ox goads, squeaking of wheels and rattling of chains mingled with the oaths of teamsters, produced a din indescribable."

The following year, W. S. McBride observed that "St. Joseph resembled in some respects a vast besieged

Wagon-wheel ruts still score part of overlanders' trail near the North Platte River in southeastern Wyoming.

Color photographs by Ron Cronin

Westbound wagon awaits ferry at St. Joseph, Missouri, in an 1859 photograph taken by painter Albert Bierstadt.

As depicted in 1850 illustration, St. Joseph appears prosperous–and far more serene than it really was.

city. . . . to the west, were some springs, long rows of tents were pitched closely under the bluff rocks. All the principal roads leading to the town were thickly beset with white tents. . . . Auctioneers were selling mules & horses and all kinds of merchandize all through the streets. Music of every variety could be heard from the groceries and gambling houses. Intelligent looking men, ignorant men, dandies, clownish & negligently cloth[ed] men, old gray head men, beardless boys, negroes, Indians and *all sorts of men* could be seen crowding along together. . . . Minstrel girls promenaded the streets singing 'Oh California, that is the land for me,' with great crowds of . . . men and boys following them."

A few of the overlanders immediately struck it rich when they reached California or Oregon. But in the 1840s and '50s, fortunes were more often and quickly made in western Missouri by the merchants, livestock dealers, blacksmiths and gunsmiths, hotel and saloon keepers, con artists and travel agents who supplied and sometimes fleeced the emigrants. The latter made fairly easy marks. After selling their property back East, they arrived at Independence and St. Joseph with considerable cash but little good information about how, and even where, to proceed. Mostly they were from long-settled, well-watered and wooded regions, and were accustomed to eating regular meals, sleeping dry under roofs, crossing rivers on bridges or ferries. Rarely had they used firearms for imperative purposes, cooked over buffalo-dung fires, coped with hundreds of miles of treeless plains, deserts, September blizzards, grizzly bears or Indian nations. Consequently, when hard-sell Missouri entrepreneurs assured them that it was foolhardy to start without several tons of food, ovens, odometers, canoes, feather comforters, snake oil or whatever else they had in stock, the green pioneers frequently believed and bought.

Independence and the small, adjacent hamlet of Westport–which was to grow rapidly and become Kansas City–had been the northern terminus and depot for the Santa Fe trails since the early 1830s. With a preexisting reputation and facilities of sorts for outfitting travelers, this community had a head start in attracting emigrants. In the spring of 1843 about a thousand of them passed through the area and enriched it.

This was a matter of great interest to Joseph Robidoux, who operated a trading post farther up the Missouri in the Blacksnake Hills. A seasoned frontiersman, Robidoux was the head of an immense family–including five younger brothers and 67 children sired with various red and white women–many of whom had already established commercial interests in the Western plains and mountains. Robidoux saw no good reason why Independence should monopolize the overland trade, which he reckoned was bound to increase. To get a share of it, he began to subdivide the land around his trading post, laying out a new town that he called St. Joseph. Within two

Bil Gilbert has written a number of books about the West, including Westering Man, *a biography of the 19th-century mountain man Joe Walker.*

years, lots that initially sold for $100 were bringing $500, and there were 682 residents, nearly all of whom were in the emigration business.

Independence and St. Joe–as it was invariably called–competed ferociously. To promote their own community and disparage the other, merchants and civic groups bought newspaper ads, hired agents in Eastern cities, distributed handbills and testimonials from satisfied customers. A principal selling point for St. Joe was its location. It was about a hundred miles and a week's wagon travel closer to the point where the Missouri access routes converged–near present-day Marysville, Kansas–to form the first leg of the Oregon-California Trail. Independence boosters pointed out that, in terms of time saved, this was often an illusory advantage since, after outfitting at St. Joe, on the east bank of the Missouri, travelers often had to wait for several days to cross the river by ferry.

Time was of the essence in commencing the 2,000-mile journey. It was perilous, because of lack of forage for draft animals, to start before new grass began to sprout, usually as early as mid-April. But parties who delayed leaving until the latter part of May often found the plains seared by drought. Thus, as soon as the Missouri countryside greened, there was a slow-motion stampede of wagons as teamsters sought first dibs on new grass, unmuddied water holes and limited firewood.

Entrepreneurs in Independence and St. Joe circulated rumors that the rival town was ridden with disease, particularly cholera, the great scourge of the time. This was true, but equally so for both communities. Richer travelers could lodge, for 75 cents a night, in primitive hotels or boarding houses, usually four to a room and two to a bed. Most people stayed in sprawling campgrounds under extremely unsanitary conditions. In the spring of 1849, a three-square-mile area in and around Independence was filled with emigrants, their wagons and tents. During May, 17 people died of cholera within one 24-hour period while staying at hotels in town. During just one week of that same month, some 50 people died of the disease shortly after leaving Independence and were buried in a mass grave at a ford on the Red Vermillion River in Kansas Territory.

There were also epidemics of accidents. People were kicked by mules and crushed under wagons. They suffered bad burns, gashed themselves with axes, were shot accidentally or on purpose. In consequence, doctors prospered. Only two years after St. Joe was founded,

Pioneer wagon train painted by William Henry Jackson toils toward Chimney Rock in Nebraska, one of the most famous landmarks to be seen on the Oregon Trail.

there were 11 physicians in the town. Jointly they announced a "uniform system of charges." According to the notice, members of that ad hoc HMO would visit patients within a mile of their office for a fee of one dollar. Each additional mile cost another 50 cents, and the rates were doubled after dark. Once on the scene, any of the physicians would treat small blisters for 50 cents, large ones for 75 cents. They would administer an enema for a dollar and extirpate small tumors for $2.50. The charge for a simple case of midwifery was $5, but delivery of twins cost $10, the same as for amputating an arm. Fingers and toes were surgically removed for $5 each, a leg for $20.

In their negative advertising campaigns, Independence and St. Joe merchants warned that the rival town was not only a pesthole, but also a den of thieves in which unwary buyers were extravagantly overcharged for shoddy goods. Again, however, neither community was in fact any better or worse than the other. In both, all prices were greatly inflated as compared with those prevailing in the East, and passing overlanders customarily paid twice as much as local residents did for the same goods. Also, during the spring migration season the price of everything was jacked up to whatever the traffic would bear. Thus, in 1849 a bushel of corn, which in other months sold for 15 cents, cost a dollar during April and May. Similarly, the price of ham rose from 3 cents to 12 cents a pound, butter from 8 cents to 25 cents. In mid-March a yoke of oxen could be had for $40. A month later, the same animals brought up to $65.

Horses were finicky eaters and seldom durable enough to be worked hard on the plains. Both mules and oxen were sufficiently sturdy, and their relative merits were endlessly debated. Mules were swifter–by a factor of three to five miles a day–but were notoriously stubborn and given to stampeding. Oxen were more docile and had greater raw pulling power. A pair of mules cost twice as much as a yoke of oxen. This was a critical factor for many emigrants, and by 1850 most of them were pulling their wagons with oxen (SMITHSONIAN, September 1993). Mules continued to be favored by parties of single men–especially gold-seekers–who could afford to travel faster and lighter.

Some emigrants bought spare oxen because, despite their hardiness, fatalities were high. Kirk Anderson, approaching Scotts Bluff in Nebraska Territory, was astonished by the dead oxen that lined the trail. "There ought to be a Heaven for all ox that perish under the yoke where they could roam in the fields of sweet clover and timothy," he wrote. "A traveler could find his way with no other compass or guide than his nose alone."

Generally, emigrant families had relatively light farm wagons. The huge Conestoga freighters often portrayed in films and fiction were actually too heavy and cumbersome for the rough Western trails. The lighter wagons could trundle along for 15 to 20 miles a day carrying about a ton of cargo. As a rule their beds were no more than 11 feet long and supported 5-foot-high hickory hoops, which were covered with oilcloth or canvas. In the spring of 1849, Independence alone had 20 establishments where smiths and carpenters worked around the clock making such wagons or converting to overland use those that the emigrants brought with them.

The most improbable of those wagonwrights was Hiram Young, born a slave circa 1824 in Hawkins County, Tennessee. In his youth, he mastered various wood-

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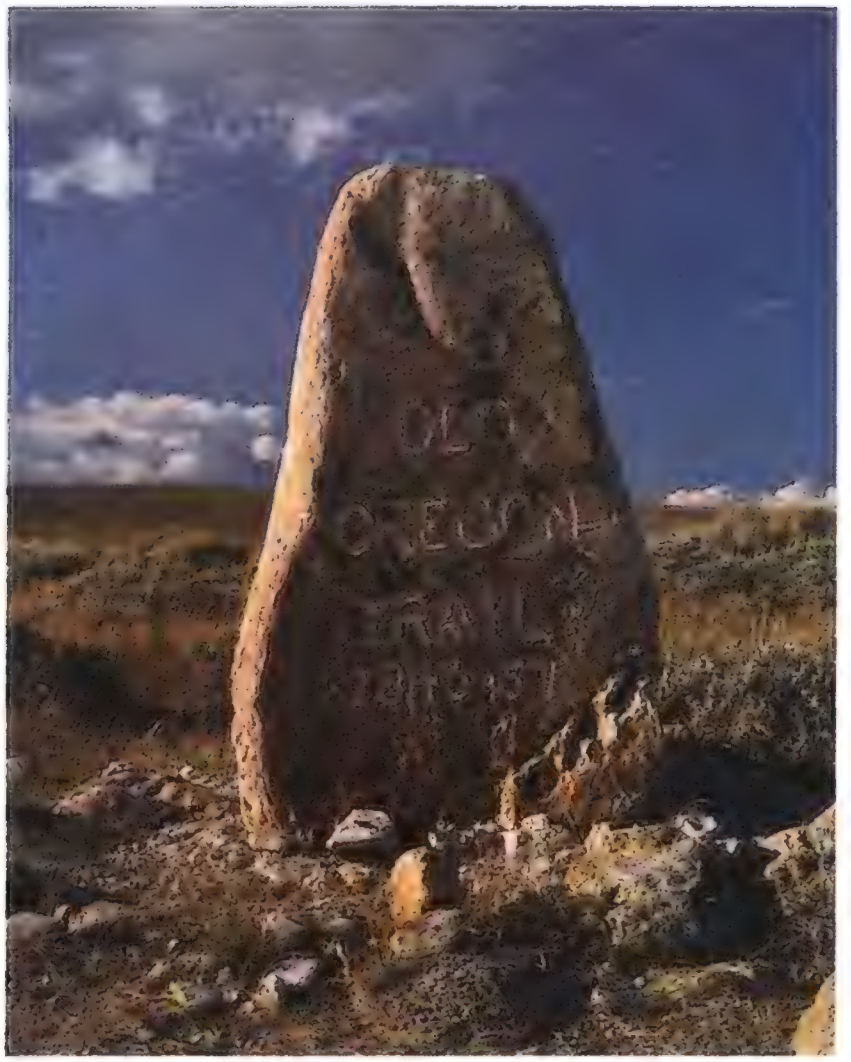

Oregon Trail marker at South Pass in Wyoming was set in 1906 by Ezra Meeker, who pioneered in 1852.

Wagon debris litters parched earth at Well Spring, once a campsite on the trail in north-central Oregon.

working and wagon-building skills and was hired out by his owner to local people who needed his services. In 1848 or thereabouts, a California-bound emigrant of abolitionist sentiments bought Young for $900, promising that for an equal sum he would be set free when they reached Missouri. Once they arrived in Independence the price was raised to $1,500, but the resourceful craftsman found plenty of work and shortly accumulated that sum. Within a year or so after gaining his freedom, Young became the proprietor of his own shop which, according to one satisfied customer, "could turn out, in a year, a fabulous number of the very best class of yokes."

The 1860 census of Jackson County–a slaveholding jurisdiction distinctly Southern in culture–listed Young as a "mulatto wagon maker" who had a net worth of $56,000, a very respectable fortune in those days. Shortly thereafter he, his wife, Matilda–whom Young had bought out of slavery–and their 15-year-old daughter fled from Independence to escape the likes of William Quantrill's Confederate guerrillas, who raided and destroyed much of the town. They found sanctuary at Fort Leavenworth, in Kansas, but later returned to Independence. There, Young reestablished and expanded his business, prospered again, had a public school named for him and died in 1882.

A more innovative but less successful wagonwright was William Thomas. His ambition was to produce true prairie schooners–wagons fitted with sails that could be driven by the wind to the Pacific Coast at rates of up to 15 miles per hour. In 1846 at a shop in Independence, he built the first of those craft. It was 25 feet long and 12 feet high and had hubs "big as barrels." With a 20-foot mast mounted on it, the enormous contraption was hauled to a nearby prairie for a trial run. A few associates were aboard to man the rigging while Thomas sat on a raised platform and steered. Catching the wind, the machine went careening across the countryside. Unable to see that his crew had prudently jumped ship, the captain continued to shout orders for reefing the sail until the vehicle crashed and capsized in a ravine. Thomas, who thereafter was called "Wind Wagon," continued to tinker with his failed invention until 1859.

Boom times for weapon suppliers

There were no impediments to the success of Missouri's gunsmiths and gun suppliers. Jacob Snyder, who went West in 1845, said he paid more for his arms and ammunition than he did for his wagons, mules and provisions. William Kelly, who went to the California goldfields with a party of 25 men, recalled: "We were well equipped, each man carrying in his belt a revolver, a sword and a bowie-knife; the mounted men having besides a pair of holster-pistols and a rifle slung from the horn of their saddles, over and above which there were several

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Joseph Robidoux, fur trader and shrewd businessman, founded St. Joseph to cash in on westward migration.

[shotguns] and rifles suspended . . . in loops where they would be easily accessible. . . ."

Around the jump-off towns there was, according to Kelly, "an unintermitting fusillade," as his companions and others played with their new weapons. Stray deer, hogs and dogs were favorite targets, but it was a daily occurrence for shooters accidentally to shoot bystanders or themselves. The first fatality in Kelly's party occurred several days west of Missouri when one of the men attempted to remove his loaded gun muzzle-first from a wagon and blew himself to kingdom come.

Some emigrants intended to hunt–though after a few years game was scarce and spooky along the trails–but mainly they armed themselves to the teeth because they were terrified of Indians. Few had ever met a hostile one but many had grown up hearing horror stories about the fierce red-white wars that had been fought 50 years before in the Appalachians and the Ohio Valley. Therefore they came prepared to fight their way across the West. In fact, during most of the emigration period when whites simply passed through native lands without trying to occupy them, relations were fairly good. Frequently Indian hunters gave directions and brought in food that they exchanged for clothing, ammunition and household gadgets.

Between 1840 and 1850 an estimated 5,000 of the 90,000 men, women and children who made the overland crossing died en route. Only 115 people were killed by Indians, usually in retaliation for unprovoked assaults committed by nervous, trigger-happy emigrants or racial fanatics. Travelers' memoirs suggest that more people drowned or were killed or maimed in firearms accidents. Many emigrants said that, in retrospect, they had felt more threatened by careless gunplay in their own companies than by hostile natives.

"By degrees the arms were laid aside"

Most gun accidents occurred during the first weeks of the trip. Each spring and summer, the hospital at Fort Kearny, a few hundred miles west of Independence and St. Joe, was filled with shooting victims. Farther on, the travelers became less jittery and did less bodily harm to one another. Alonzo Delano remembered how it was when his party first crossed into Indian territory above St. Joseph in 1849: "Every man displayed his arms in the most approved desperado style, and rarely thought of stirring from the [wagon] train without his trusty rifle. But no enemies were seen. By degrees the arms were laid aside, and by the time we reached Fort Laramie all were abandoned except a knife and sometimes a pistol, which might be seen peeping from a pocket."

Initially, when Western trails were still obscure and unmarked, emigrants often engaged veteran mountain men to lead them. In 1841 John Bidwell, a Missouri farmer and schoolteacher, joined the first party to go to California. He admitted that had they not had with them Thomas (Broken Hand) Fitzpatrick, the renowned brigade leader of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, "probably not one of us would ever have reached California because of our inexperience. Afterwards when we came in contact with Indians our people were so easily excited that if we had not had [Fitzpatrick] the result would certainly have been disastrous." The following year Fitzpatrick, for a $500 fee, took an Oregon-bound party up the Platte to the Snake River. In 1843 at Fort Laramie, a company of 38 would-be emigrants met Joe Walker–reputed to be "the best man in the country"–and paid him $300 to lead them to California, which he did without loss of life.

Thereafter the trails commenced to be marked by ruts and piles of debris. Rather than hiring professional guides, the overlanders began to buy guidebooks of which, after 1845, many were available. Some were wildly inaccurate. One of the best was *Route Across the Rocky Mountains,* published in 1846 by Overton Johnson and William Winter, who had teamed it to Oregon three years previously. After suggesting what should be

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taken–200 pounds of flour per person, slabs of middling bacon, several pounds of sugar and coffee, stout clothing, a tent and some Indian trade goods–Johnson and Winter warned against overpacking: "Many persons preparing to emigrate . . . have crowded all sorts of trumpery into their wagons. This is generally thrown away . . . after it has broken down either the wagon or team. Persons should remember, that the distance from their starting point is twenty-five hundred to three thousand miles; which is a rather long land carriage, especially where the articles taken are of little value."

Such advice was consistently ignored. Shortly after leaving Missouri for California in 1849, Isaac Foster came across abandoned "stacks of bacon a half ton in place, piles of hard bread and stacks of flour, lead and powder." He was astonished that most emigrants clung to their possessions until their teams broke down, and only then threw their things away. Among the abandoned commodities found by other forty-niners were mounds of beans, rice and tobacco; many articles of clothing, shoes and hats; mattresses, quilts, washstands, soap, mirrors and "corner what-nots."

A few farsighted individuals intentionally hauled cargos that were burdensome on the trail but would be worth nearly their weight in gold once they got to the Coast. One of those was Henderson Luelling, formerly a prosperous storekeeper and fruit grower in Iowa. In 1847, with his wife, eight children and four wagons, he joined an overland party bound for Oregon. In one of the wagons, pulled by three yoke of oxen, were a number of young, grafted fruit trees: apple, pear, quince, cherry, a few black walnut and shell-barked hickories. Luelling's daughter Eliza thought that her father gave more attention to this nursery stock–which was packed in crates containing a mixture of topsoil and charcoal–than he did his family. On the North Platte, an officious fellow traveler advised Luelling that the trees should be abandoned; that trying to take them farther was foolish and dangerous. But, according to Luelling's son Alfred, "Father's answer was such an emphatic 'No' that he was allowed to follow his own course after that without much remonstrance."

Once Luelling reached the Willamette Valley, he cleared land and began taking and grafting cuttings from the trees. Within three years he had 18,000 new ones, which he began selling at a dollar each. Eventually he earned a million dollars in the nursery business.

As it had to Luelling, it also occurred to enterprising Missouri livestock dealers that the thousands of passing emigrants would need things to grow, raise and eat if and when they reached the Coast. Therefore, while continuing to supply overland teams, the shrewdest of those traders began speculating in farm and ranch animals. Buying livestock cheaply at Independence and St. Joe, they herded the animals to Oregon and California, where they were sold at high prices to arriving emigrants. Profits were big. An ox that could be had for $30 at Independence brought $100 to $120 in California. Cows selling for $12 in Missouri were resold for $100 to $150, and sheep bought for $1.25 went for $8 to $12.

After 1855 the boom years of the overland livestock business had passed, and the character of the emigration itself changed considerably. The coastal states–California entered the Union in 1850 and Oregon in 1859–were filling up and becoming more self-sufficient

An iris farm in Oregon's fertile Willamette Valley looks like the paradise the emigrants hoped to find.

as travel to them became easier and less risky. Nearly all the rivers and streams on the main trails could be crossed on bridges or at least at established fords. In the 1840s there had been only a handful of rude trading posts between Missouri and the Pacific Coast. During the next 15 years, wayside stops, inns, liveries, villages and towns proliferated, and overlanders were seldom more than 50 miles from, so to speak, service stations.

There was freight service to the Coast, and by 1860 Pony Express riders were carrying mail from St. Joe to Sacramento, California, in about 13 days. Railroads were extended to western Missouri in 1859 and linked up to California in 1869.

After the Civil War, Independence and St. Joe were no more important to overland travelers and traders than many other communities to the west of them. Currently they are satellites of Kansas City, and in the main indistinguishable from other communities of this metropolitan area. However, both have commemorated the old days with bronze markers, historical exhibits and restored buildings. One of the most evocative of these memorials is a plain brick building, maintained by the local historical society, adjacent to a tangle of Interstate highway ramps that cross downtown St. Joe. With a nearby parking lot for horses, it was built in 1850 by the canny Joseph Robidoux and contained seven apartments. Those he rented to new arrivals who had come to start outfitting businesses or buy land. Robidoux Row, as it came to be called, seems to have been the first if not the best Western motel.

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Hanging baskets of flowers adorn modest, well-kept shops in the heart of Chemainus' Old Town, extending a festive yet homey welcome to the 400,000 visitors who come each year to admire its celebrated murals.

By Stanley Meisler

Take a look at a town that wouldn't lie down and die

The mill closing augured ill for Chemainus. But spruced up, with bright murals everywhere, it's turned into a Canadian tourist haven

Like mist over the nearby bay, a cold gloom hovered over the little Vancouver Island town of Chemainus as it faced the 1980s. The waterfront sawmill, mainstay for more than a century, was losing millions of dollars a year. Then the government of British Columbia agreed to subsidize a downtown revitalization program that would spruce up the shops on Willow Street with planters, benches and parking space. But supermarkets were sprouting in bigger towns just a few miles down the Trans-Canada Highway. Who would shop in tiny Chemainus, even a spruced-up Chemainus? "People were wondering whether the town was going to die or not," says Rodney Moore, a retired meat shop owner. The death knell seemed sure in 1983 when the mill shut down.

Yet today, Canada's Chemainus is a thriving town, hued in sprightly pastels, a kind of gingerbread Carmel of the North that attracts 400,000 tourists a year, most

making a detour to take in 32 murals now adorning the sides of buildings and standing walls in a festival of color. The population has swelled to almost 4,000. It is a spanking new magnet for young Canadians looking to put down roots in a town with a future and for older Canadians bent on retiring to a land of tranquillity.

Chemainus now has art galleries, sidewalk cafés, espresso bars, craft and antique shops, gift stores and a 270-seat theater where none stood before. The $3.5 million theater complex, serving as the west coast campus of a drama school in Alberta, guards the entrance to the town like an enormous, pastel orange wedding cake. A new mill has opened, technically efficient, slimmed down, making profits selling the highest quality knotless wood. Chemainus now advertises itself with a copyrighted slogan, "The Little Town That Did." The slogan may be hokey, but no one can deny that the town, in a remarkable way, halted its slide a decade ago and transformed itself into something new.

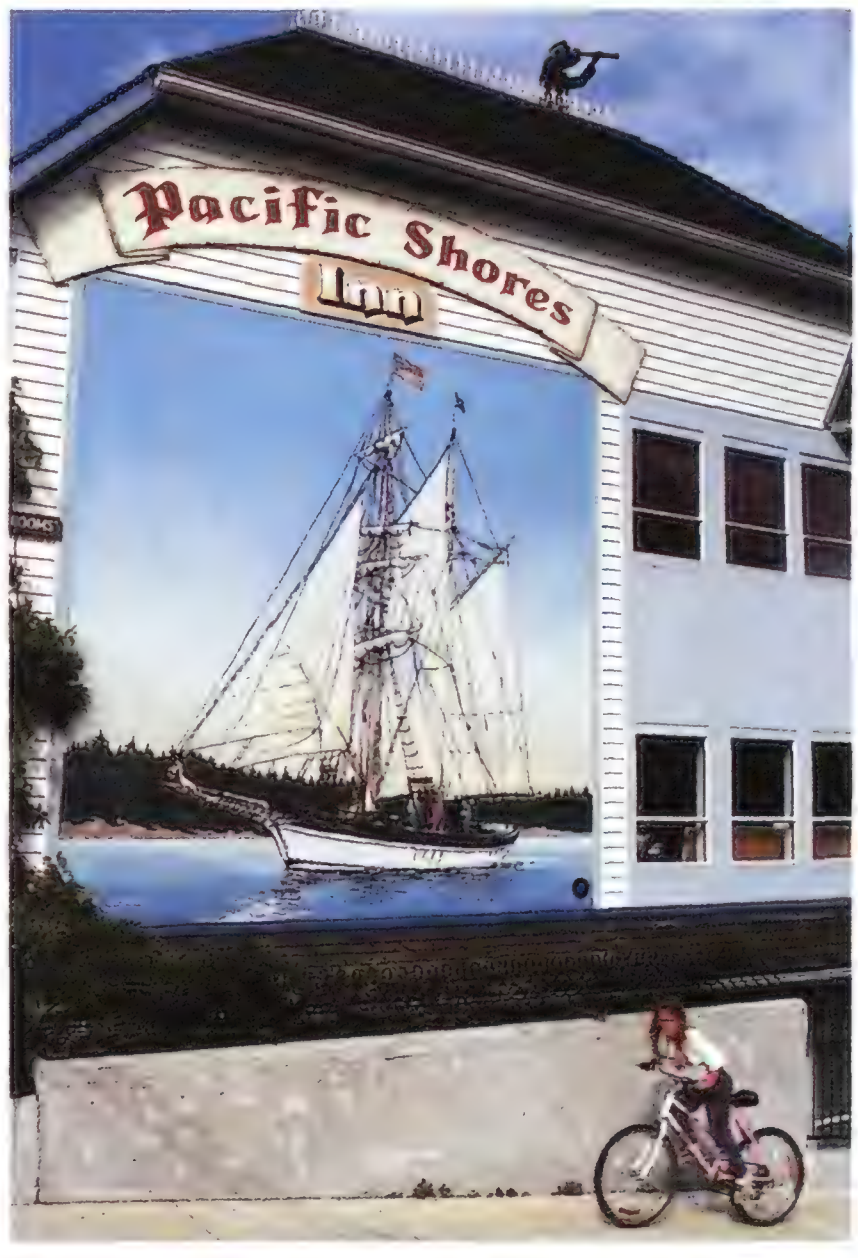
The word has spread. Other towns in trouble–from Queensland, Australia, to Steubenville, Ohio–are mimicking the experience and splashing murals on every available outdoor wall. Chemainus managed in a decade to wean itself from dependence on a single industry. Towns in the American Midwest and elsewhere, their economies tied to a sputtering steel plant or a ghostlike auto assembly line, need to wean themselves as well. Many are embracing the Chemainus way.

Chemainus, though, has always had an advantage over most other towns in trouble. Vancouver Island is one of the patches of scenic paradise on Earth, forested and mountainous, with a climate so temperate that the provincial capital, Victoria, 50 miles to the south, almost never sees a snowfall. You can sit on a bench at the beach at the end of Maple Street in Chemainus and watch an occasional freighter slip past a quiet panorama of isles and inlets beyond the bay, and you can hike back a couple of miles from town and look on expanses of forest so vast and breathtaking that they seem to burst out of a Frederic E. Church landscape. It is not easy to give up on Chemainus.

Most old-timers attribute the surprising dynamism of their town to a German immigrant, Karl Schutz, who arrived in Canada from Heidelberg in 1951 at the age of 21. He is not admired by all. "There are a lot of people who resent Karl because of his grandiose ideas," says Rodney Moore. Yet even they acknowledge that he helped turn the town around with what once seemed like a wild-eyed plan for outdoor murals. Schutz, machinist, carpenter and businessman, is still dreaming up schemes to promote Chemainus worldwide–and still prompting neighbors to roll their eyes at his grandiosity. Canadians shy away from promoting themselves, and Schutz believes in the power of promotion.

Canada has long been hospitable to skilled immigrants, but Schutz, then a journeyman machinist, could find no work in his trade during his first weeks in his new home, a 74-cent-a-night immigrant hostel in the city of Vancouver. But the Canadian Pacific Railway needed crews to keep the rails in shape and hired him for nearby Vancouver Island. He joined a crew that worked the rails on a line that passed through Chemainus. The crew foreman would let his men end the week's work there so they could rush to its bank to deposit their checks. No sooner done, Schutz would scamper down to the MacMillan Bloedel mill on the waterfront each week and ask for a job. The heavily accented German's weekly quest became a joke at the mill, but after a few months the manager relented and hired Schutz as an unskilled worker. Like so many others before and after, Schutz found a home in Chemainus because of the mill.

He started out sorting lumber at the mill but eventually wangled a transfer to its machine shop. "And then it came to me," he says, "this unbelievable thing about America. You can become whatever you want. You do not have to be a machinist like in Heidelberg because



The *Spirit of Chemainus* painting honors a brigantine built in the town's bay as a training ship in 1984-85.

Photographs by John Livzey

Laundryman, grocer, bootlegger, gambler, merchant: Hong Hing's easy credit and kind heart made him a favorite in the town. Paul Marcano painted him outside his weathered shop from historic photograph (above).

your father was a machinist." He had whiled away many hours with carpentry as a hobby, so after five years he quit the mill to open what became a highly successful custom woodworking shop in Chemainus, married another German immigrant, bought a good deal of land and retired in 1971 at the age of 40 to live off his business profits and real estate.

Vacationing in Europe, Schutz and his wife came across outdoor frescoes on the walls of monasteries of northern Moldavia in Romania. These 15th- and 16th-century works of art, with their brightly colored scenes from the Bible and the lives of saints, are so magnificent that it is kind of mind-boggling to conceive of Chemainus' trying to mimic them. But Schutz does not shy away from leaps of imagination. He did not expect Chemainus' murals to rise to the heights of religious fervor and artistic mastery that produced the Romanian murals. But, looking on them solely as attention grabbers, he could imagine Chemainus throwing up some kind of murals of its own to attract tourists. When he proposed the idea to the chamber of commerce in 1971, however, they rejected it out of hand.

A decade later, when Chemainus received its grant to spruce up the downtown streets, Graham Bruce, a new mayor still in his 20s, asked Schutz to come out of retirement and prepare a plan for future development of the town. Schutz agreed and whipped up a plan. As Bruce, now 41, a former provincial minister of municipal affairs and owner of the only supermarket in Chemainus, remembers it, "We had been kicking around a whole bunch of ideas." Schutz proposed the rejected murals as a centerpiece. "The mood was skeptical. Then a majority began buying into the concept." Schutz finally persuaded a town revitalization committee to go along. However, there was still a lot of grumbling here and there.

"People did not want to have anything to do with tourism," Schutz says. "I told them tourism is a billion-dollar industry all over the world. Before the war, Heidelberg existed because of it. My divorced mother supported us by running a bed-and-breakfast." Even after the municipal council agreed, in 1982, to appropriate $10,000 to commission the first five murals, Bruce recalls, "I remember getting buttonholed on the street and asked if I was crazy, spending all that taxpayer money on murals when it wouldn't make a pinch of difference."

The murals made far more than a pinch of difference. Backed by grants from the federal government in Ottawa, the provincial government in Victoria and local entrepreneurs, Chemainus commissioned 7 murals in 1983 and 20 more over the next nine years. Schutz and the committee supplied the themes–almost all based on old photographs in a 1963 book, W. H. Olsen's *Water over the Wheel*, a history of Chemainus. For the most part, the walls posed artistic problems. Artists had to avoid roof overhangs, windows, air conditioners and doors and, in some cases, had to paint over the rectangular indentations of concrete blocks.

The murals, the longest 120 feet, the tallest 33 feet, transformed the look and mood of Chemainus. Most filled existing wall space, but one mural, *Native Heritage*, with portraits of 19th-century Coast Salish, the people who inhabited the east coast of Vancouver Island before the white settlers arrived, was painted on a special wall set up in Heritage Square, a small, new park with a fountain and sculptures. To create Heritage Square, however, the council had to reject a petition signed by 120

The author, United Nations correspondent for the Los Angeles Times, *writes frequently for* SMITHSONIAN. *His 1993 articles included Joan Miró and Prague.*

townspeople protesting the waste of parking space.

The murals do not have the sweeping power of Diego Rivera's marches through Mexican history. It is hard to believe that they will ever make their way into any university's Art 101 course. Yet, all in all, they are quiet, tasteful, pleasing, professional works of art, and they leave a visitor, especially on a sunlit, glorious day, with a mood of good feelings and some insight into both the romance and harshness of a life of logging and milling on Vancouver Island in the not very distant past.

Even the most sophisticated tourist is affected by their color and dignity. Genoa-born Gianna Pontecorboli, an Italian newspaper correspondent who keeps a small but fine collection of modern art in her New York apartment, came upon the Chemainus murals by accident three summers ago. She and her friend had planned to drive to the north of Vancouver Island to take a ferry to Alaska, but traffic slowed them down. They decided to spend the day exploring the island instead. When they came upon Chemainus with its pastel-hued buildings all decorated in murals, they suddenly felt like they were entering a Mediterranean oasis in northern climes. "We decided to lunch there and then spent hours wandering around to look at the murals," she says. "The atmosphere of Vancouver Island is pretty Nordic, but Chemainus was suddenly full of color. Some of the murals were pleasant, some of them less so. But I remember more the impression made by all of them together with all their colors. I found it fresh."

Any visitor soon chalks up favorites. My own is *Waiting for the Whistle,* painted by Robert Dafford of Lafayette, Louisiana, on the cinder block wall of Mayor Bruce's supermarket during three weeks in 1989. Dominated by sepia and blue, this mural, the longest in Chemainus, features scenes of workers preparing to leave their shift at the mill in the 1940s. Since government grants cannot be used in Canada to commission work from foreign artists, private donors came up with the money. "They paid us $4,000," said the 43-year-old Dafford, who was helped by his brother, Douglas. "Actually, our minimum is $5,000, and, in terms of square footage, we did a $10,000 mural. But we did not care about the fee. It's like a badge of honor to muralists to have painted in Chemainus." That badge opens the door to much new

Alan Wylie's *World in Motion* encompasses a half-century of historic Chemainus buildings and events. This section shows the 50th-anniversary celebration of Victoria Lumber & Manufacturing Company, June 1939.

Japanese float, winner in parade marking the golden jubilee of Chemainus' mill, is commemorated in this mural. Karl Schutz, who devised town's revitalization strategy, strolls by, savoring the project's success.

work. Portsmouth, Ohio, for example, has commissioned Dafford to paint 40 murals on a floodwall on the Ohio River.

Harry Heine, an Edmonton watercolorist of seascapes, was paid even less five years earlier. In 1984, Heine, who has lived in the suburbs of Victoria for more than two decades, and his son, Mark, painted a pair of marine murals in the subtlest of soft blues and foaming whites. The tranquillity of the mural *H.M.S. Forward*, which depicts Coast Salish on the shoreline watching the arrival of a Royal Navy gunboat in the 1860s, sets it apart from most of the other, more-kinetic murals. "At the beginning, the artists virtually gave the murals to the town," the 65-year-old Heine says. "They paid us $3,000 for the two. But they paid all our expenses as well. And I'm a watercolorist. I paint quite fast. As it turned out, one of the galleries in Chemainus now sells a lot of my paintings because of the murals. So I've made money on the deal. It paid off."

Armed with old photographs, the muralists set down the history of Chemainus. Sometimes, though, they indulged their poetic license. Painting *Company Store* from a circa 1917 photograph of the store at the old mill, Dan Sawatzky, who now lives in Chemainus, slipped an anachronistic product on one of the shelves–"Schutz Brand, A-1"–in honor of the man who inspired the murals. The historic allusions, of course, make them more meaningful to old-timers in Chemainus than to tourists. Crystal Holman passed the corner of Victoria and Willow streets one Saturday morning and found Smithsonian photographer John Livzey taking a shot of *Lenora Mines at Mt. Sicker*. "You're taking a picture of my father-in-law's work site," she told Livzey. More than 80 years ago Albert Holman had helped dig the railroad tunnel leading to the mines.

The modern history of Chemainus, which takes its name from the language of the Coast Salish, was determined mainly by the great forests of Vancouver Island. The Hudson's Bay Company, which once owned the island, did not sell a tract in the area to a white settler until 1858. Early settlers soon realized that their wealth lay in wood. Lumber could be floated easily into Chemainus Bay (or Horseshoe Bay, as it was called then). A stream emptied over a 50-foot drop into the bay at the future town site, cascading with enough power to run a waterwheel. The first mill, powered by water, opened in 1862. No other sawmill operation on Canada's Pacific Coast can trace its history that far back.

Chemainus was never much of a town–at least until recently. By 1883, only the mill, two houses, six shacks and

The tree was
like his family journal.
His great-great grandfather,
or so the story went,
planted it.
His mother played in it.
And now his daughter was
about to get married
under it.
As a child he'd wondered
if the tree itself
held them together. But
he knew now it
was some-
thing far
greater than
that.

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The Rev. Mervyn Skey, resting in pew at United Church, says retirees lead the procession of new residents.

Co-owner of a Native artisans' studio, Herb Rice is ex-president of the Chemainus Arts and Business Council.

a company store doubling as the post office stood there. Until 1886, when the railroad came, the townspeople reached the outside world only by steamer or boat. Although the guest register of the Horseshoe Bay Inn reveals that two prominent personages–American millionaires John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie–visited Chemainus within ten days of each other in 1900, presumably to sell some of their timberland to the mill, the town was hardly a haven for tourists. The total population was only 600 in 1921, about half of it Japanese, Chinese and Coast Salish laborers. There were no electric streetlights until 1927 and few street signs until 1951. Chemainus was best known, aside from the mill, for the Sawdust Shifters, its indefatigable baseball team.

The mill and the murals–a dynamic duo

The fortunes of the town always depended on the inconstant fortunes of its mills. The present mill is the fifth to stand by the bay. Almost half of British Columbia is covered by forests of hemlock, spruce, pine, cedar and fir, and forest products still account for more than half the province's exports. Chemainus has always kept in step with the main business of the province.

That is true even in the new era of the murals. Officials of the mill, owned by MacMillan Bloedel, behemoth of Canada's forestry and paper industry, sometimes feel annoyed and frustrated by exaggerations in many accounts of the miracle of the murals. The mill owners are usually painted as villains. By closing the mill, according to these stories, MacMillan Bloedel brought the town to its knees; muralists then galloped to the rescue like red-coated troopers of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. News and television features usually play down and even sometimes ignore the fact that a new mill opened two years after the old mill closed. Nor do tourists understand this. Only 900 of the almost 400,000 visitors last year took one of the mill's twice-weekly tours. "It's nice to get a chance to tell our side of the story," says tall, bearded, ex-logger Al Dewar, the mill's personnel supervisor.

The mill, according to Dewar, lost a total of $17.5 million from 1979 through 1981. MacMillan Bloedel had no choice but to close it. "The old sawmill," says Dewar, "used to be a spaghetti factory. We just cut wood into two-by-fours whether they had knots or not." With the help of laser beams, trimmers in the new sawmill search for and cut the clearest slabs of wood out of hemlock and fir timber. The new mill specializes in producing knotless woods, cut to sizes used in Japanese construction. "We identified a niche in the market and went after it," says Dewar. A number of jobs have been lost in the niche, but the new sawmill is profitable, earning $25 million last year, according to Dewar.

Clear-eyed observers in Chemainus, Schutz among

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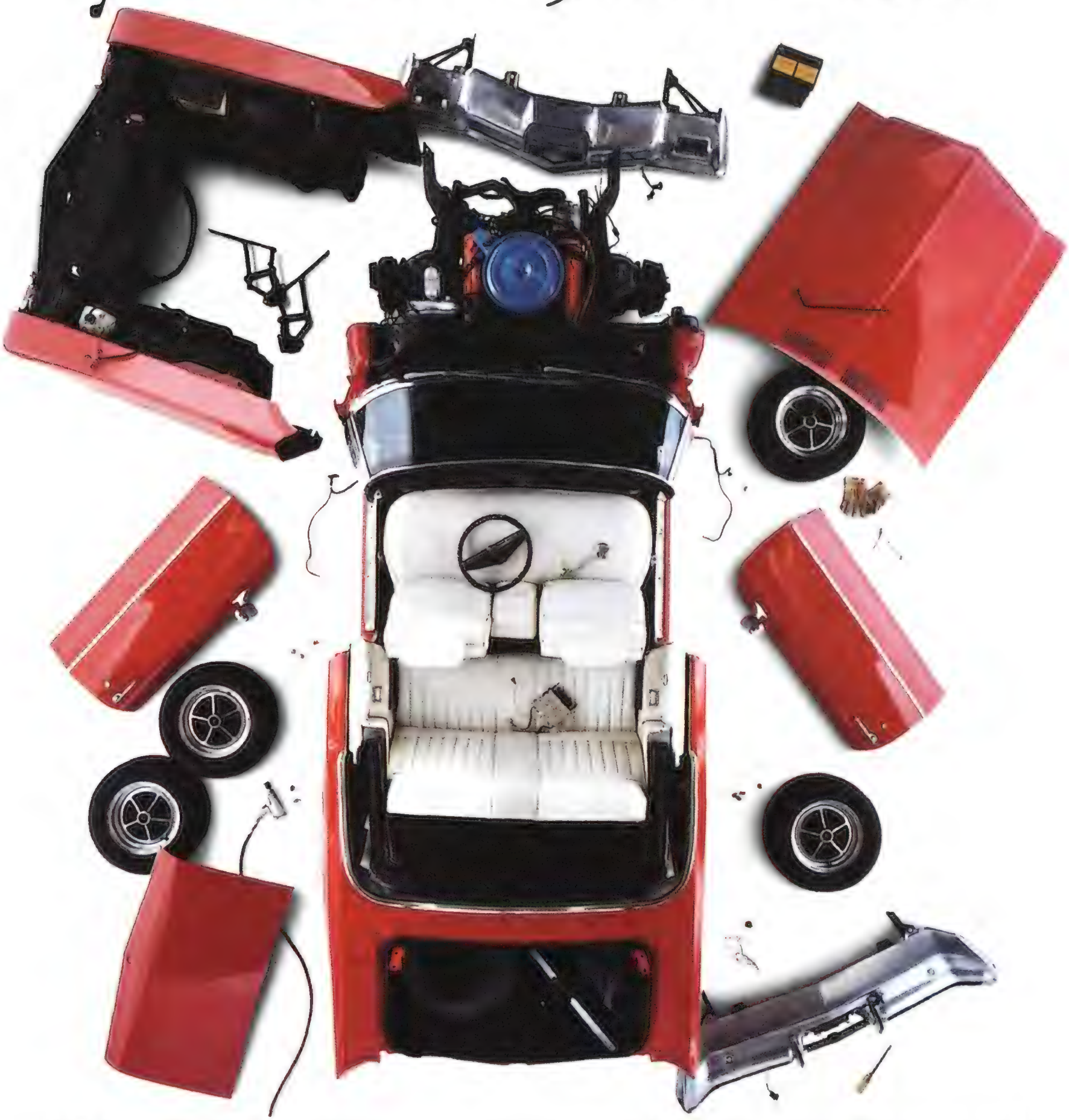

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Daisy Bonde (left) ran the telephone exchange from her home, 1908-15; there were only 30 subscribers.

them, do not underestimate the mill's continued importance. "This town would lose much of its infrastructure if it closed," says the Rev. Mervyn Skey, minister of the United Church. The revitalization surely depended on both mill and murals.

By diversifying its economy, Chemainus took a vital step that other British Columbia forestry towns may be forced to take sometime soon. Western Canada's forests are so abundant and profits from wood and paper so important that for years few Canadians fretted over the cutting down of trees. This attitude has changed. Many British Columbians are upset over the steady loss of old growth. Critics have decried British Columbia as the "Brazil of the North" for denuding its rain forest, much like Brazilians are destroying the Amazon's, and Canadians resent losing forests as wondrous as cathedrals just to supply lumber to Japanese developers.

Delving into history has forced Chemainus to face embarrassments of its past. As one resident puts it, the town can be "a little redneck" and not always tolerant of minorities in its midst. The largest minority before World War II were Japanese millworkers and fishermen and their families. The tiny Chemainus Museum displays a photograph of an Easter egg hunt in the 1930s for the children of workers of the Victoria Lumber & Manufacturing Company, as the mill was known then. Perhaps a quarter of the children are Japanese. Life was not easy for this minority. "We were accepted but we weren't accepted," says 78-year-old Bill Isoki of Toronto, a retired accountant born in Chemainus. Japanese millworkers were paid less than white workers; their fishermen had a harder time getting licenses than other fishermen. After Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, Canada followed the lead of the United States and put all Japanese-Canadians on the west coast into internment camps. To heighten the humiliation, a gang of toughs marched to the city cemetery on the outskirts of town and ripped out Japanese gravestones. Children continued to play on some of these gravestones outside the cemetery fence for a half-century.

Japanese and Japanese-Canadian tourists come often, drawn both by the murals and by a need to search for traces of the town's Japanese past. A few years ago, some complained to town officials that the murals, supposedly telling the history of Chemainus, left out their past. In 1991, an embarrassed Chemainus commissioned two murals honoring that heritage. Stanley Taniwa of Manitoba, forced out of Chemainus as a baby and sent with his family to an internment camp, returned to paint *The Lone Scout*, a portrait of Edward Shige Yoshida, who founded Canada's first Japanese-Canadian Boy Scout troop in Chemainus in 1929. The second mural, *The Winning Float*, painted by another Japanese-Canadian artist, Joyce Kamikura of British Columbia, celebrated a Japanese float that won first prize in the 1939 parade honoring the 50th anniversary of the mill.

Most tourists do not see a third tribute. A group of Japanese-Canadians, including Isoki, set down a small slab in the cemetery in 1991 with a handful of damaged gravestones beside it. A plaque explains in understated tones: ". . . there was a desecration in this cemetery. All Japanese gravestones were removed by person(s) unknown. . . . of late some . . . have been found. These have been incorporated into this monument which is dedicated to the memory of the Canadians, and others, of Japanese origin who were buried in this place." There are 30 family names on the monument.

A traditional consecration was called for

The new Chemainus has also been forced to face its Indian past. Herb Rice and a partner joined the revitalization a few years ago by opening up Images of the Circle, a Native crafts studio. Rice, a 40-year-old woodcarver and former actor, is Coast Salish. He came to town with a grievance. The mural *Native Heritage* featured portraits of his 19th-century ancestors, including his own great-grandmother. Muralist Paul Ygartua of Vancouver had drawn the likenesses from old photographs in Olsen's history. But the portraits seemed to give the ancestors new life, making their descendants uneasy, and so needed to be consecrated in a traditional way to allow the ancestors to feel peaceful in death. "My uncle told me," says Rice, "that every time he passed the mural and saw his granduncle, he would choke up."

A member of the Arts and Business Council, Rice soon found himself with enough influence to do something. Speaking slowly and dramatically, sometimes sounding ambiguous and even mysterious, Rice insists that he has never accused the town of ill will. He managed to per-

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suade the council to sponsor a consecration in mid-1993 for those portrayed in the mural. About 800 people, both Coast Salish and whites, attended the ceremony. "It was not a potlatch, a potlatch is for one family," says Rice. "It was a feast." After dancing and speechmaking, the families placed four blankets on the ground, a chair on top of the blankets, a print of the mural on the chair, then more blankets. Traditional prayers closed this consecration. The families gave everyone a Canadian 50-cent piece and gifts like blankets or leather pouches as mementoes. "We felt our ancestors had been taken care of in a traditional way," Rice says.

Karl Schutz still busies himself at schemes for attracting even more tourists. He is now creating the Pacific Rim Artisan Village which, he says, will make Chemainus and British Columbia the showplace for the arts and crafts of all the countries in America, Oceania and Asia that border the Pacific Ocean. Part museum, part theater, part school, part art shop, part theme park, the Artisan Village will feature people from such countries as Australia, Indonesia, Thailand, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, Japan, the United States and Canada, demonstrating their crafts and selling their work.

So far the Pacific Rim Artisan Village comprises an ornate gate, a cabin with offices, 50 acres of land, construction plans for the first pavilion, a nonprofit foundation, a group of donors and reams of unabashed promotion from Schutz. "Seven hundred years ago there was a Renaissance that transformed the world," he says. "It created millions of jobs in the crafts. It began in Florence, Italy, with a few artists dreaming." Now, when the Artisan Village becomes a reality, "British Columbia can achieve what Europe did 700 years ago." When his Chemainus neighbors hear statements like that, they tend to shake their heads and mutter that Karl has really turned grandiose this time. But a troubling thought keeps them from ridiculing him. They remember that they dismissed Karl Schutz as grandiose once before–when he first came up with the crazy idea some 20 years ago of painting outdoor murals all over town.

Tourists study well-stocked *Company Store*. Under a then common credit system, c. 1917, buyer's coupons were sent to the mill for reimbursement, and the total was deducted from that employee's paycheck.

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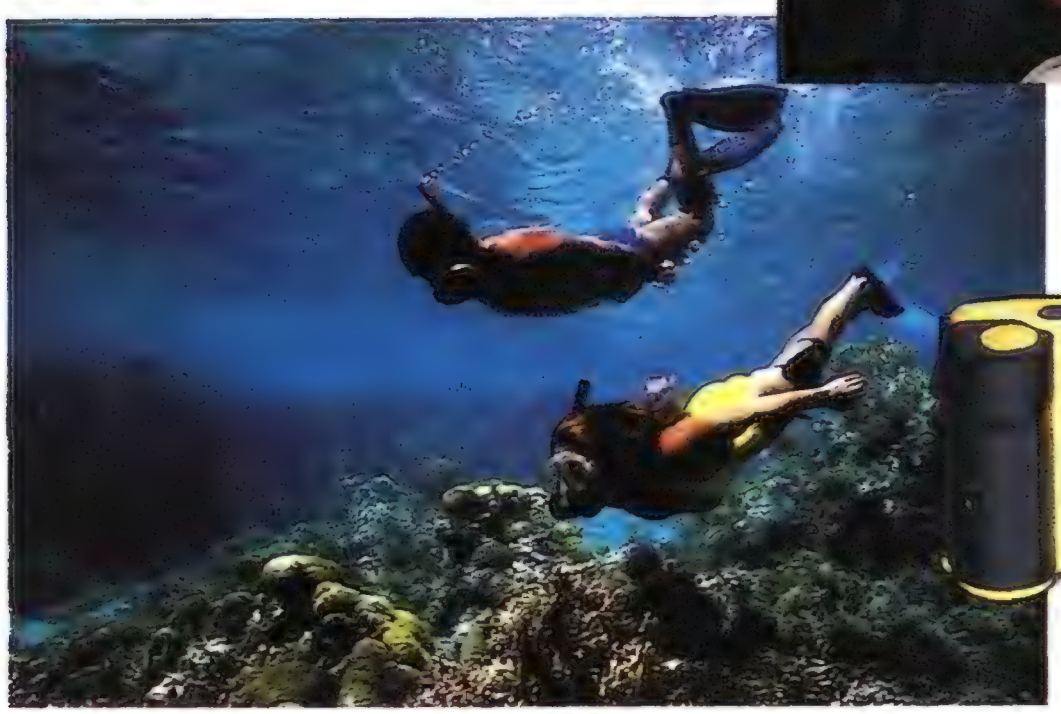

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By Timothy Foote

Tapestried tales of two rough Channel crossings

In June 1944, the Allies landed in France; in 1066 the Normans took England; both battles can be memorably revisited–as needlework

Anyone who could defy gravity and the local ordinances long enough to stand on the topmost spire of the great cathedral in Bayeux would command a sweeping perspective of land and sea and history. Scarcely five miles away, a curve of sand stretches left and right for 50 miles from the Cherbourg peninsula to the city of Caen. Beyond it is a body of water whose deep, powerful tides and contrary winds have for ages figured in, and often frustrated, the warlike ambitions of ambitious men. The practical French call it La Manche–after the sleeve it somewhat resembles. The British, with a global assurance that Gauls find galling, have convinced most of the world it is the English Channel. Whatever you call it, the history of the place is an ideal corrective to the view that man is the master of the physical world or that war is bad because nobody really wins.

From the vicinity of Bayeux, just under ten centuries ago, an unimaginably large army and fleet–8,000 men, 2,000 horses, 450 ships–assembled with a view to sailing over and seizing Britain. For weeks the prevailing west wind pinned them to the coast of France. But finally, on September 27, 1066, it began to blow out of the southeast and carried them cross-Channel to the town of Pevensey. From there, with fire and sword–and remarkable cruelty–they occupied England, changing it and a good deal of future history besides.

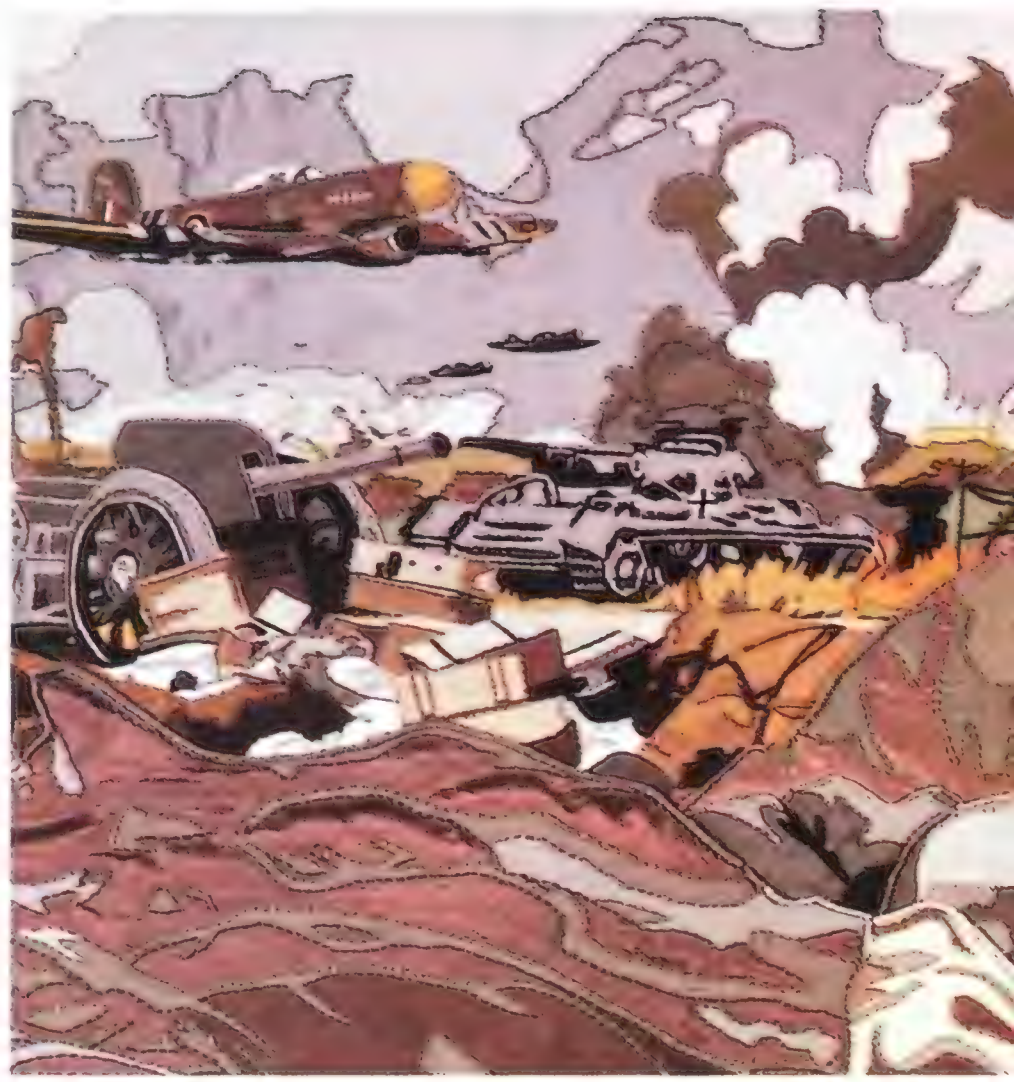
In England, exactly 50 years ago next month, an unimaginably large army and fleet–176,000 men, 9,500 warplanes, 600 fighting ships, 4,000 transports and landing craft–stood poised opposite Bayeux in towns like Poole, Weymouth and Shoreham for a momentous assault on the French coast. And had to wait while, in a war room outside the city of Portsmouth, their commander agonizingly weighed changeable winds and tides that threatened to cancel, and perhaps put in permanent jeopardy, the great cross-Channel attack. The code name of the operation was Overlord. As everyone knows, though the weather was bad, Gen. Dwight David Eisenhower (otherwise known as "Ike") took a chance. "OK, let's go," he said. And they did. But as thousands of men would learn on D-Day, the 6th of June, 1944, the

With Spitfires flying low-level cover (above), a vast fleet heads for France in Overlord Embroidery. Crammed to gunwales (left), William the Conqueror's ships sail for England in the Bayeux Tapestry.

winds and waves and tides of the Channel had not done with them yet.

Every summer along the shoreline before Bayeux where the Allied forces landed, a scattering of French families now happily take what sun there is. Children swim or play in tidal pools, or fly kites on long shallow beaches near towns with names like Vierville, St. Laurent, Colleville, Arromanches and Lion-sur-Mer. This June there will be more of a crowd, however. Both in the French towns and beaches–and across the Channel in English harbors from which the great invasion force sailed–legions of old soldiers and sailors, pilots and paratroopers will be on hand, along with patient wives and families. Together they will commemorate the comradeship, the pain, the sacrifice and the victory won when men struggled across a sleeve of troubled water, fought their way ashore past buried mines, barbed wire, pillboxes and German machine gun nests to change the fate of a captive continent and the future of Western Europe. They knew these beaches by the names Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno and Sword.

It is unlikely that even the youngest who fought on D-Day will pass that way again. They are now pressing on toward three score years and ten. Partly because of that, elaborate plans for their last return have been in preparation for months, even years. Urged by travel agents, unit reunions and nostalgia, they will come from all over the world, some of the many from America traveling by actual Liberty ships taken out of mothballs just for the occasion. England and France are alerted. Poised on both sides of the Channel, like the Allied and German armies in 1944, are a clutch of new and refurbished museums, most notably in Bayeux and Caen and cross-Channel in Portsmouth, crammed with D-Day relics, memorabilia and astonishing film footage.



This panel, on the destruction of the German 7th Army after it was encircled by Allies at Falaise, is one of the few scenes that dwell on the horrors of war and defeat.

Launched in the dark over Ste. Mère Eglise

In a theater in Caen's huge memorial museum, two giant screens, hinged in the center at a slight angle, like the two panes of an old car windshield, offer simultaneous side-by-side, black-and-white film documentaries of what was happening on both sides of the Channel just before and during D-Day. As Germans brace along the Atlantic wall, Allied forces mass in England. As the French underground blows up a German train spilling a load of tanks down a hill, paratroops are suited up for a launch in the dark over St. Lô and Ste. Mère Eglise. Finally, as the assault begins–and falters on Omaha Beach–to the deafening shock of heavy guns at sea and the crunch of bombs falling, you can see the foundering tanks and landing craft, the death and courage on the fireswept beaches, even a young Luftwaffe pilot strafing a crowded beachhead, the actual images provided from the wing cameras of a fighter plane.

In Bayeux Tapestry version of the Battle of Hastings, William's cavalry, especially the poor horses, are thrown every whichway in the shock of the fighting.

Today, along those beaches, there is no shortage of weathered memorials or of broken German battlements and shell holes half overgrown with grass ready to be tramped over. Close to the water near St. Laurent, a modest French plaque reads: ". . .the Allied forces landing on this shore, which they called Omaha Beach, liberated Europe on June 6, 1944." Hard by is the tiny "Brasserie L'Omaha, Bar et Cocktails." Farther east on the road above, where the Germans fired from, and where you park to walk down to see a spire raised to the dead of the U.S. 1st Infantry Division, a French sign warns tourists, "Don't Leave Valuables In Your Car." Still farther away on that high ground an old soldier can shoot 18 holes at the Omaha Golf Course, or visit the cemetery where a silent legion of gleaming white crosses stands at permanent parade rest over the graves of 9,380 of the 13,959 American soldiers killed during the Normandy Campaign.

How to hold on to the past has always been a puzzler; we tend to rely on the human heart and on museums–neither totally accurate or reliable. Besides, the experience of combat takes place inside each individual man and lodges there, almost impossible to communicate to others. Those who fought their way ashore and across Europe, who will meet in Normandy next month, still carry the battle with them. But D-Day, and all that flowed from it, will soon slip from living memory beyond their grip, and ours, over the edge of history. Even if you did not fight there but have lately walked the beaches, it is easy to wonder how what happened there will be brought to mind a hundred years from now. Five hundred? A thousand? Ten thousand? Moth and rust corrupt. Paper rots. The nitrate of old film decomposes. Those crumbling pillboxes may one day be dusty archaeological finds. And thus far, history does not seem inclined to guarantee the continued preservation of even the highest of high-tech societies.

Wanted: "a Bayeux Tapestry in reverse"

It is possible to imagine that the most enduring record of D-Day, not to mention one of the most eye-filling displays available for 50th-anniversary visitors, is very low-tech indeed. It is 272 feet long, 3 feet high and made of bits of cloth. It was put together by 25 women of the Royal School of Needlework, working for four years, and was dreamed up and paid for by a pioneer conservationist, a generous, irascible, dog-loving, stag-stalking, fox-hunting English lord. His aim was to commemorate Operation Overlord, D-Day and the Battle of Normandy. His explicit inspiration was another illustrated piece of cloth, 224 feet long, which tells the story of the Norman Conquest of England and has preserved it for nearly a thousand years. What Lord Dulverton wanted, he said, was "a Bayeux Tapestry in reverse."

Detail shows part of American action during D-Day, from largely unopposed landing (left) on Utah Beach, to start of near disaster at Omaha, where first wave of infantry was cut down even before getting ashore.

The parallels and contrasts are clear and illuminating. Two cross-Channel invasions, both successful, both of enduring international significance, their outcomes balanced on the knife edge of threatening weather. The Bayeux Tapestry (which no one should miss who puts foot in Normandy this or any other year) is not only what scholars might call a seminal historic document, but an artistic marvel as well. Its inexpressibly expressive narrative elegantly blends stylized primitivism, medieval sophistication, raw history and raw propaganda, with a kind of *haute* comic book panache.

Given as much, the remarkable thing is that what Lord Dulverton got can hold a candle to it. For in its way it too is a marvel. Occasionally lumpily populist, it is often powerfully affecting in ways that 20th-century public art almost never manages to be. The Overlord Embroidery is less an action story–with bodies of individual men and horses kinetically flying every whichway in battle, as they do in the tapestry–than a prolonged pageant. Done in broad strokes and astounding colors, it draws the imagination into vast scenes of sky and seascape filled with ships and planes and men.

There are 34 horizontal panels each more than eight feet long and three feet high. They are housed in Portsmouth in an elegant, circular seaside museum designed expressly for it. The beginning presents England at war, with hot yellows and oranges as London burns, and silvery searchlights stabbing deep into night skies filled with German Heinkel 111 bombers. The Allied buildup follows, and the Germans–led by Field Marshal Rommel–shoring up an Atlantic wall bristling with pillboxes, barbed wire, mines and wicked, black "hedgehogs," which look like giant children's jacks tossed into the surf, to smash landing craft. And so to the crossing itself. American and British paratroops dropping in darkness to east and west to protect the D-Day beachhead. Fleets of bombers and warships softening up the enemy. The landing, the fight on the beaches and some of the fighting afterward. It ends with a column of British troops marching along a poplar-lined road east of Caen. By the side of the road a little group of French peasants is mourning a dead man. The accompanying commentary notes that the Germans sometimes shot civilian prisoners as they retreated.

The style is a kind of rough-hewn, impressionistic realism. When reproduced on a printed page some panels seem flat. But brightly lit in their dark museum, the scenes glow and deepen in perspective like flora and fauna in some huge tropical fish tank.

Compared with these posterish effects, the figurants in the Bayeux Tapestry (like Overlord, it is in fact *not* a tapestry but an embroidery because it is not woven) seem like marvelous miniatures. Anyone who moves attentively along beside it in its new setting in the Bayeux museum dives into the minutiae of the medieval past: planting and foraging and the carpentry of shipbuilding, and so on into battle equipment and battle itself with warhorses, swords and battle axes (used mainly by

The author, a member of the Board of Editors, has written about topics ranging from Hadrian's Wall to the state of Europe in the time of Columbus.

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Notables include King George VI and Ike, who bears a resemblance to Prime Minister Harold Macmillan.

In a civilian vignette, a French couple peers out of their window at descending British paratroops.

Commando Bill Millin won a spot in the embroidery by piping his unit across a bridge under heavy fire.

the English), chain mail, cavalry charges and deadly flights of arrows (shot mainly by the French).

Less than half of its 224-foot length is devoted to the actual battle and crossing in modified Viking ships loaded with armed men and skittish horses (they had to warp the boats in sideways to get the horses off). The decisive event, of course, is the fight near Hastings between William, duke of Normandy, and Harold Godwinson, the brand-new king of England. The story goes back some years before the battle to an oath of fealty that William claimed Harold once made to him during a trip to France. (Significantly, Harold, driven ashore by contrary winds and tides, may have landed in France by mistake.) Partly because of that oath, when Harold became king of England, a title William laid claim to, William got the pope's approval for his assault on England. It was a diplomatic coup. Overnight William's cause became a quasi crusade as an international army of knights, intent on land-grabbing and pillage under the papal blessing, flocked to his flag.

A Norman slant, but English stitching

The Bayeux Tapestry is blatantly a Norman document. For hundreds of years it was thought to be the admiring work of Matilda, William the Conqueror's queen, who supposedly had it run up by the ladies of her court to honor her husband's crowning as king of subjugated England in December 1066. Only recently have experts decided (on the basis of the stitching work and the spelling of place-names in the Latin captions laced into its surface) that the Bayeux Tapestry was made in England by English hands. Because he appears prominently, the best guess is that Bishop Odo of Bayeux, the Conqueror's clerical half-brother, had it done to curry favor with William when he felt he was falling out of favor. William was a ruthless man as well as (literally and figuratively) a bastard, the son of Robert, duke of Normandy, by a beautiful tanner's daughter. Falling from favor with him was not a good thing.

Some creative genius clearly did the drawing and design. So one has to imagine Odo putting up the money and laying down the story line: "Be sure to put me beside William in the pre-battle dinner. And don't forget the moment when I ride up and rally the troops when they begin retreating." William inevitably appears to advantage, too, as a brave and resourceful battle leader (which he was). Despite its bias, when the story takes up the actual fighting it seems to do justice to the English army–and to what we know of the battle. After all, the more English there were and the more fiercely they fought, the greater the Norman victory would seem.

One could hardly expect Normans to explain that on October 14, the day of the battle, Harold and many of his footsoldier army had reached Hastings dog-tired.

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Sandra Lawrence works on one of 34 watercolor cartoons she did for members of Royal School of Needlework.

Lord Dulverton provided the idea, the cash and the care needed to create "a Bayeux Tapestry in reverse."

They had just defeated an invading army of Norwegians at Stamford Bridge in Yorkshire, then dashed back to Hastings more or less on the double. In an all-day fight, William's cavalry and archers finally wore them out. Arrows, aimed high, began to rain down upon them. In the tapestry Harold is shot in the eye. After driving back a Norman charge, the English foolishly break ranks and plunge downhill in pursuit, only to be cut off.

The tapestry itself and the brief running captions laced into it are the source of much of what the world knows about the battle. The Overlord Embroidery has no captions sewed into it. Most of today's viewers, however, know much more about what happened on June 6, 1944, than they do about the goings-on of October 14, 1066. Besides, the D-Day assault was on a scale so immense that coverage of the details of action would be impossible–except in a tapestry stretching the 25 miles from Dover to Calais. One Overlord panel presents American soldiers debarking from landing craft, some in good order. This occurred at Utah Beach, where casualties were low. The tide had carried the landing craft a mile southeast of their intended target to a point where there happened to be little German opposition. Many men, tossed by heavy seas and winds, were seasick that day, but at Utah the small craft bringing the U.S. 4th Infantry Division ashore were somewhat sheltered in the lee of the Cherbourg peninsula. Calmer seas meant that a number of the floating tanks that were to come in with the men actually reached shore to protect the infantry on the exposed beachhead.

Landing craft crammed with seasick soldiers

Thirty-five thousand men of the U.S. lst and 29th Infantry Divisions hit Omaha Beach, between Vierville and Coleville, and that was a different story. The Overlord Embroidery also shows wrecked landing craft and American dead in dark waters, smashing up against the black hedgehogs, while others plunge and struggle onto the beach. It would have taken a tapestry as long as this one just to begin to tell the Omaha story. Because of bad navigation and heavy German shore fire, the small landing craft, crammed with seasick soldiers, were cast loose nearly 6,000 yards from shore in seas far heavier than off Utah. All but two of the floating tanks sank in the swells almost instantly, so that when the first wave of men reached the beach they had no protection or rallying points. They burrowed into the sand, or flung themselves back into the sea to keep from being cut down in withering fire. Later waves of infantry got ashore but could not clear paths through minefields fast enough. For hours the issue hung in the balance. More than 1,000 American soldiers were killed, and more than 3,000 wounded. But by nightfall the lst Division had fought its way up off the beach and a mile or so inland.

It was an unlikely alliance.

But when five state governments, two wildlife conservation groups and one energy company came together, 32 species of threatened wildfowl secured a brighter future.

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It was an unlikely alliance. But when five state governments, two wildlife conservation groups and one energy company came in with concern and came out with solutions, it seemed more inspired than unlikely, after all.

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Moment of defeat for Harold comes with an arrow in his right eye. Scene shows treatment of dead and dying.

The Overlord Embroidery is emphatically English. But the team that Lord Dulverton assembled to produce it made a concerted effort to celebrate Allied cooperation and be evenhanded in dealing with the different forces and various branches of the service involved. A general, an admiral and an RAF air chief marshal, known in the project as the "Three Wise Men," reviewed each panel and worried about balance. They had all fought in World War II, and they saw to the accuracy of such things as makes of tanks and aircraft, and military insignia.

Along with Dulverton, they also decided which leaders and generals should have their images included. Obvious starters: Churchill, Eisenhower, Montgomery, King George VI and Lord Louis Mountbatten. One who did not make the cut: Gen. Charles de Gaulle, the imposing leader of the Free French and a man not exactly renowned for cooperation. Anglo-French relations have always been delicate. But historian Stephen Brooks, the author of a book on the Overlord Embroidery and now curator of the Portsmouth D-Day Museum, discovered that Anglo-American sensibilities are still easily aroused too. Recently changed in view of the 50th anniversary, the soundtrack of the film shown as an adjunct to the embroidery had said "the Supreme Commander was an American–there were more of them." Americans were outraged, Brooks reports, because the phrase suggested Ike got the nod (over Britain's brilliant and famously turf-conscious General Montgomery) for reasons of statistics rather than skill. British viewers, surprisingly, were outraged, too, because, they said (correctly, it turned out), more British Empire soldiers, sailors and airmen took part in D-Day than Americans. The earlier version also repeated the famous British crack, circa 1942, about the Yanks being "overpaid, oversexed and over here." Brooks found that many British viewers objected to this, too. "The Yanks we knew," they said, "weren't like that at all."

When it came to the work of actually painting the scenes for the embroidery, various celebrated and more or less realist artists came to mind. But Dulverton eventually realized that such figures would not have the time to take on the immense amount of work required–and would, to put it mildly, be loath to take corrections and suggestions. The one who finally got the job seemed, even to herself, one of the most unlikely candidates imaginable. She was 22-year-old Sandra Lawrence, then studying classical drawing in Florence and supporting herself as an au pair in an Italian family. Ironically, in her spare time she dabbled in Surrealist art.

Her name came up quite by chance, and the English affection for amateurism encouraged Dulverton to let her show what she could do. Her first worked-up drawings were rejected, but she tried again and this time got the job. "I had just spent eight years as a rebellious student in a convent school," she recalls. "My own paintings were deep blue and full of wavery dark shapes." She knew very little of World War II but with disarming candor admits that the thought of doing vast pictures of men struggling in the Channel intrigued her. She was also the daughter of a brigadier. "In a way," she says, "I wanted to prove to him that I wasn't what he thought, some social parasite down there in Florence just doing daubs." Besides, if her work made the grade, she was astonished to learn, Lord Dulverton was willing to pay her by the week. Substantially more, she says, than the "fiver a week" she had been living on in Florence.

The haunting ghosts of famous photographs

Sandra Lawrence never saw the Bayeux Tapestry. Instead, armed with a rough outline of D-Day events done by Col. Ben Neave-Hill, she plunged into war histories, and sheaves of photographs from London's Imperial War Museum, most particularly the images in *Purnell's Illustrated History of the Second World War.* Anyone familiar with the time will find the embroidery haunted by the ghosts of famous photographs past, including Robert Capa's chilling, blurry vision of soldiers in the water on Omaha Beach. Week in, week out, for four years, she worked. The first steps were 6-by-16-inch pencil sketches. If they were agreed to, she moved on to posterish watercolor cartoons the same size as the embroidery panels.

As each was approved, often after emendation by Lord Dulverton or the Three Wise Men, she ran it down to 25 Princess Gate in London, where 25 seamstresses of the Royal School of Needlework took over. Founded in

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Each panel began as two layers of linen stretched tight on a frame and stitched together to prevent slippage. A full-size replica of Sandra Lawrence's cartoon was made on tracing paper. A seamstress with a special needle pricked tiny holes in the paper following Lawrence's design. Then the tracing paper was fixed over the linen frame, and "pounce," a dark powder made of ground cuttlefish and charcoal, was sprinkled along the holes, creating dotted lines on the cloth below. With the cartoon original hung up to serve as model and color guide, the dots were linked, exactly defining not only the major shapes of things but the shapes of different colors, even the shapes of the shadows that appear under the eyebrows on a human face. Most shapes are single patches of cloth.

The figures in the Bayeux Tapestry are sewed into its linen background with eight different colors of wool, as in crewelwork, or the kind of samplers that little girls used to prepare. Around them, most of the tapestry remains the color of antique linen. But the entire surface of the Overlord Embroidery is covered with colored cloth sewed precisely over the pricked-and-pounced shapes, and fitted exactly together like the pieces of a king-size jigsaw puzzle.

Sandra Lawrence had a lively palette. The needleworkers strove mightily to find materials to match her colors and create contrasting textures. Some of the stuffs listed: sateen, crepe, rep, corduroy, barathea, serge, silk, velvet and burlap, 350 yards of cord to edge the pieces of appliquéd material, and braid to create special effects, among them some astonishingly effective two-tone barbed wire. The three-dimensional look they sometimes create is stunning. In all, 50 different kinds of cloths and textures were used to reproduce a surprising array of objects and surfaces: Channel waves; the wings of Spitfires and Flying Fortresses; landing craft, beaches; the faces of men blackened for night fighting; combat clothes of all sorts.

A major task involved finding actual cloth from uniforms of World War II military units, as well as prolonged consultation on, and sewing and resewing of, tiny details like combat ribbons and military insignia. Since the shapes were interdependent, it was hard to make changes once most of the pieces had been sewed into place. Notes on panel 20 include: "We have crammed in a Mustang," a reference to the long-range U.S. fighter that flew cover for daylight bombing missions.

Some small changes were fairly easy. The handlebar mustache of a pilot in one panel was removed (it apparently looked too insouciant). A French civilian's hair curlers were replaced by a hair net when it was pointed out that in 1944 French women didn't have hair curlers. But attempts to render General Montgomery's physiognomy required six revisions. (Looking at panel 28, an American viewer feels that Ike's face could have used some fine-tuning, too; in one panel he somewhat resembles Prime Minister Harold Macmillan).

Some mistakes were let go as too difficult to fix or not significant enough. One was discovered, and corrected, after the completed embroidery had gone on public display at a ceremony attended by the Queen Mother. It involved one of a handful of noncelebrities identified in the embroidery: Bill Millin, a piper in Lord Lovat's Scouts, an elite, green-beret-wearing commando unit originally recruited from Scottish deerstalkers. Millin landed on Sword Beach with Lovat's Scouts, their aim to link up with British paratroops dropped to secure bridges over the river Orne and a canal near Caen. He created one of the memorable war stories of Britain's D-Day by imperturbably piping his way across a bridge

Sunny uplands of victory gleam as Gen. Omar Bradley's First Army breaks out of the St. Lô area and then rapidly begins to outflank enemy forces in late July.

ahead of his unit while bullets whizzed around him. The embroidery showed Millin with bagpipe and a standard camouflage helmet. But in fact he had that day worn only the Scouts' green beret with silver insignia. Painstakingly the Royal School of Needlework gave the green beret its due.

After working on the embroidery, Sandra Lawrence recalls, "one stopped looking inside oneself and began looking outside at the world." She went on to a successful career painting portraits and still-lifes, and precise, bright-hued studies of plants, birds and animals. The small Overlord sketches are now on loan to the Portsmouth D-Day museum. Dulverton had given her a half interest in her spectacular cartoons, and eventually arranged for them to be sold to a charitable trust in Britain. There is hope that they will find a place to be displayed, perhaps in the New World sometime during this anniversary year.

Lord Dulverton died two years ago, after presenting the completed Overlord Embroidery to the nation. Since not everyone has room for a 272-foot-long cloth pageant, it had no home until the present Portsmouth museum was built around it. How long it will last no one can tell, but if its cross-Channel counterpart is any example, Dulverton's "Bayeux Tapestry in reverse" may prove indestructible. The Bayeux Tapestry disappeared from the world's notice shortly after it was created, and did not reappear in history until 1476, when records show it was being kept, folded up most of the time, in the Bayeux Cathedral, but once a year hung all around the nave to celebrate the Feast of Relics of Saint John.

Having miraculously survived for seven centuries, it was scheduled to be cut up and made into wagon covers during the French Revolution, when Republican zealots tried to destroy religion by confiscating church property, smashing fonts, altars and stained glass, and temporarily turning churches into civic centers. A town official hid it, however. In 1803 it was exhibited in Paris and studied by Napoleon, who then had plans for the invasion of England.

Experts think the last ten feet, which may have shown William being crowned king of England, grew frayed and were cut off for neatness. The line of kings descending from him endured long enough to make England less insular, a cosmopolitan country with holdings in France and an increasingly international role to play–including the shaping of an alliance to overthrow Napoleon, and another to break the iron grip of Adolf Hitler on the people of Europe.

Sadly, Charles de Gaulle, who did not find a place in the Overlord Embroidery, may have the last word on D-Day. Near Omaha Beach a plaque quotes him as follows: "Weapons have both tortured and shaped the world. Shameful and magnificent, their story is the story of man." Happily, that story can sometimes be recorded with a needle.

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HAVE YOU DRIVEN
A FORD LATELY?

By Mike Lipske

The RARE art of promoting nature by stirring pride

With birds and song, 'Parrot Man' Paul Butler spreads the gospel of this remarkable group by helping locals build environmental awareness

In a village called Teakettle, in the country of Belize, it's merry melody time. Youngsters at the Teakettle Campion School are singing at the tops of their lungs. Even the school's dignified principal, Mr. Patnett, joins in as 243 kids belt out "Our Keel-billed Bird" to bouncy piano music from a boom box:

> It is our own bird/. . . made its home in Belize country/This beauty that's our own,/Keel-billed Toucan bird./It cared enough to choose us,/Let's have heart enough to care/By telling those among us, protect this bird so rare.

As rain sheets past the school's open windows on this steamy afternoon, a man-size toucan sweeps into the sweltering classroom. Clad in yellow and black satin with platter-size blue feet and a long papier-mâché beak, the creature is introduced as "Rainbow." The tiniest students stare goggle-eyed at this Belizean Big Bird–that is, when they can tear their eyes away from the school's other astonishing visitor, a skinny, long-haired Englishman in thongs and supremely baggy slacks doing his own dervish dance off to one side of the room. Flapping his arms like toucan wings and waving a ruler, the mad dancer bellows to the kids, "We want you singing so loud your mothers and fathers can hear you!"

"The idea is for them to leave here very excited, to go home and say, 'Mommy, Mommy, a six-foot bird came to our school!'" the Englishman explains afterward. Wind them up and turn them loose on their elders, on behalf of Mother Nature.

Paul Butler is the name of the man dancing as if nipped by a tarantula. A 38-year-old biologist, Butler is director of conservation education for the RARE Center for Tropical Conservation, a tiny (staff of six) nonprofit with headquarters in Philadelphia. Butler himself is based on St. Lucia, an island in the Lesser Antilles where he has lived for nearly 20 years.

Years ago, RARE's initials stood for Rare Animal Relief Effort, a name, notes Butler, that sounds "as if we give suppositories to constipated camels." Today, RARE is no longer an acronym for anything, but to many conservationists the name stands for one of the more unusual and effective groups on the crowded green scene. The RARE Center pitches natural-resource conservation by appealing to national pride. The group's beat has been the Caribbean, a region of stunning biological diversity beset by serious environmental problems.

Butler rises early and runs hard all day. He travels in and out of certain Caribbean countries so regularly, and revolves through the San Juan airport so frequently, that he says his luggage is always searched for contraband. He has earned more than 300,000 frequent-flier

Paul Butler (right) and Earl Green, Belize's chief forest officer, mull over entries for school art contest.

Rafael Manzanero, RARE's man in Belize, introduces Rainbow the Toucan to Teakettle schoolchildren.

miles on one of nine airlines he uses and holds driver's licenses for St. Lucia, Dominica, Tonga and the Cook Islands. He has missed his wife's birthday three years running and has suffered through dengue fever twice.

A bespectacled professional with collar-length hair and a practiced patter, Butler is a genuine catalyst–an agent of change with a how-to manual and practical experience. But he says RARE works as well as it does in so many countries, from the Bahamas to Grenada, because it remains locally driven. He relies on a kitchen metaphor to explain the group's success in conservation education: "If I go down to the corner store and bring you back a cake, you're gonna eat the cake and thank me for it. But if I give you the recipe book and the ingredients and you bake your own cake, it might come out a bit burned, but you've done it yourself. And when you do something yourself, you feel more a part of it."

In Belize, the tireless cook bringing RARE's special recipe to the people is a young government conservation officer named Rafael Manzanero. Of Mayan heritage, with thick black hair and brown eyes, he wears a crisp khaki uniform touched off by a necklace of tiny carved toucans as he leads the students at the Teakettle school in song. It is Manzanero who has taught them this anthem about Belize's national bird and who has skillfully talked the younger boys into handing over the homemade slingshots they use–with disturbing accuracy–to knock birds out of trees. He has spoken movingly here about what trees provide–"We get oxygen, we get medicine, we get lumber, we get shade"–and has asked each child to plant a tree on his or her birthday. Now as his little road show concludes, a vibrating clutch of children dances with Rainbow and Manzanero at the front of the room.

Since their colonization, the islands of the Caribbean have been hard-used. Out of the more than two dozen species of parrots, parakeets and macaws that once filled island airspace, more than half are extinct–one measure of the loss to the region's biological patrimony. High unemployment and shaky economies cast their own pall. In these troubled waters, RARE's tack is to use business marketing methods to build local support for conservation. Its focus is usually a national bird (like Belize's keel-billed toucan, *Ramphastos sulfuratus*) whose survival

Photographs by Skip Brown

as a species requires forest protection. Visiting schools and farmers' groups, and using outlets such as roadside billboards and music videos, RARE pitches its environmental message the way Madison Avenue moves beer.

"Emotions sell products," says Butler. "We're trying to use emotions of national pride to sell a concept, and that concept is conservation."

The target animals around which these local campaigns are built should be endemic, colorful and appealing–in a word, marketable. The group generally persuades island businesses to adopt the animals as symbols, and to support RARE's work with contributions. "I sit under a palm tree with a piña colada and dream up slogans," claims Butler–such as "One Love, One Bird, One Beer," a slogan used on bumper stickers in St. Vincent funded by a local brewery. Butler says the lighthearted approach has the serious objective of changing impoverished islanders' attitudes toward their forest "from apathy to understanding and affection."

Butler has been at the conservation trade long enough, finding connections between birds and pride, that he sometimes receives mail addressed to "Parrot Man." Born in England, he began making summer collecting trips to Africa at age 13, helping to gather insects and other creatures for the London Zoo. He first traveled to St. Lucia in 1977 to do research on the island's St. Lucia parrot (*Amazona versicolor*), a bird in dire straits due to hunting, capture for the international pet trade and loss of habitat. Butler ended up working for the island forestry department for ten years, helping to cook up a campaign to save the parrot.

The little Caribbean island gained independence in 1979 and, as Butler recalls, the key to saving the parrot (and, more important, its forest home) proved to be nationalism. The first step was to have it declared St. Lucia's national bird. With that, the island's cash-strapped conservationists had a potent symbol. Butler boosted parrot pride and conservation in visits and messages that touched every corner of St. Lucian society. By 1989, St. Lucia's prime minister was flying to England to fetch two St. Lucia parrots (captive-bred at the Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust) home to the island for a hero's welcome. The birds were met with a 15-car motorcade. Moreover, says Butler, St. Lucia's forestry budget has grown from $75,000 to $500,000, a substantial portion of the island has been set aside in forest reserves, and the endangered parrot's population has doubled.

That success became the model for the present-day RARE program in the Caribbean, with Butler spending some 200 days a year on the road. On Dominica, he roped in his wife, Magda, to dance into classrooms in a green-and-purple parrot costume; she was "Celia the Sisserou," representing the national bird, also known as the imperial parrot (*Amazona imperialis*). The campaign was so successful that 80 percent of primary school students supported the purchase and protection of a 200-acre tract of prime parrot habitat on the island.

RARE estimates it has beamed its message to more than 1.25 million people in ten Caribbean countries. In all of them, the program stays the same. Working closely with a country's government or conservation groups, the organization headhunts until it finds a talented local

Giant swallowtail, focus of Jamaica campaign, is displayed by island's leading expert, Eric Garraway. "It's ours. . .take care!!!" warns billboard.

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person to carry out a yearlong campaign. All the work is outlined in *Promoting Protection Through Pride*, RARE's fat conservation cookbook with advice on everything from hammering together a billboard to conducting an election for a national bird.

A couple of months ago, Butler dropped into Belize to monitor Rafael Manzanero's efforts in that country. At times, "promoting protection" seemed largely a matter of creative hanging out. Take, for example, the pair's jaunt down the Hummingbird Highway, a rutted road through the Belize bush offering what one travel guide calls "the recherché thrills of extreme discomfort and uncertain arrival time." In Armenia, a village of refugees from Guatemala and El Salvador, Manzanero asked the owner of a thatch-roofed store for permission to put a toucan poster on her door (he has given out 7,000 of the colorful posters imploring citizens–beneath the heading "I Love My Belizean Bill Bird"–to obey wildlife laws and prevent forest fires). He and Butler chatted with some children, pinned a toucan button on a barefoot tyke and rolled on to the next poster opportunity.

At Blue Hole National Park, site of a celebrated sinkhole in the forest, Manzanero stapled a poster on the outhouse door. He took a call on his Forest Department radio (his handle is "Toucan") and continued down the Hummingbird. At an orange plantation, workers crowded him begging for the popular posters of the bill bird.

Back on the road, Manzanero recounted a tale about doing this kind of outreach in Orange Walk, a rough-and-ready town up in northern Belize's flat sugarcane country. Nicknamed "Sugar City," Orange Walk is also something of a prostitution center. Following standard RARE procedure ("Our programs try to reach everybody," says Butler) the conservation officer was stapling up toucan posters in a bar when one of the half-dozen women present asked for one to hang in her room. "I said, 'Yeah, sure,'" said Manzanero, thereby setting in motion the possibility that men seeking sex in Sugar City may also have the chance to contemplate conservation.

It was also in Orange Walk that a local man complained to Manzanero about refugees who kill and eat toucans and other wild birds. "I'm not going to let no one eat my national bird!" the man assured him.

Popular among ecotourists, New Hampshire-size Belize is thinly peopled (less than 200,000) and still a place where large wild animals like the jaguar and tapir roam. Although nearly 40 percent of its land has been set aside in reserves and other protected areas, forest analysts warn that at the current pace of logging, the country will run out of valuable hardwoods like mahogany in another ten years.

Author Mike Lipske graciously declined Paul Butler's entreaty to don a toucan costume. A Washington-based freelancer, he wrote on wild mushrooms in January.

Spark plug for RARE in Jamaica, Patti Bedasse enlists the Rev. Bruce Swapp's help with preservation effort.

Belize is also a magnet for refugees from less fortunate Central American neighbors; many of the newcomers are subsistence farmers who clear and burn forest to grow food. "Poor people have poor choices," says Butler. "You can't tell a person who has no money not to clear the land." But you can tell farmers about cultivation methods that reduce soil erosion, protect wildlife and increase yields. And you can target their children, many of whom will be working the land as adults.

Center stage, Rafael Manzanero. As a sort of Central-American Johnny Mahogany Seed, he visited two or three schools a day throughout 1993, bringing the conservation message to rural hamlets named More Tomorrow, Hummingbird Hershey and Crique Jute. He drove 30,000 miles, spoke to more than 40,000 children and saw little of his own family in the process. "He's given a year of his life," says Butler, who regards people like Manzanero as the real heroes of preservation.

The driven 27-year-old earns less than $5,000 U.S. a year and pays it back in six- and seven-day weeks. He considers himself fortunate to have been given the chance to be RARE's man in Belize. The work, he says, is about "buying souls."

"You really should build up something there in the

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On the road for conservation, Manzanero confers with president of farmers' cooperative in Valley of Peace.

The Toucan Dancing Group and Rainbow shake it up for music video plugging "protection and pride."

minds of the kids," he says. "I feel that we are really borrowing the land from them, and that we have to leave it quite good for them for the future."

During Butler's stay the two men revisited Orange Walk, this time a new disco where grandmotherly types sold tortilla chips alongside the bar. The conservationists were there to catch the premiere of "The Animal's Cry," a Punta rock song by the local Youth Connection Band. Albert Tillett, the young musician who wrote the song at Manzanero's urging, visited before going onstage and offered his view of his country's predicament. He grew up in a rural village, he told them, and used to hunt and overfish. Now he has stopped. "If everybody just catch and kill and eat, what are we gonna show our children when they grow up?" he asked. "If you continue cut, cut, cut, in a future generation we will have no birds. When my kids grow up, they'll never know what a mountain cow is," said Tillett, using the Belizean name for a tapir. "They'll never know what a toucan is. That's why I say in my song, 'Hear the Toucan say no burn me out.'"

Seeking another kind of support for the program, Manzanero and Butler traveled to San Ignacio to see the Rev. Phillip Wright, the 26-year-old Anglican priest-in-charge in western Belize. In every country where RARE works, counterparts like Manzanero have persuaded local religious leaders to deliver sermons on protecting wildlife and the environment. With Wright's encouragement, the country's Anglican congregations celebrated an "environmental-awareness Sunday" last October.

Butler thanked Wright from the heart and then asked another favor. Could the Anglican pastor muster support from leaders of Belize's Catholics, the largest religious denomination in the country? For whatever reason, explained Butler, the Catholic Church seemed to be the last to jump on RARE's environmental bandwagon in the Caribbean. "The thing we used to do in some countries," Butler continued, "is go to the Catholics and say, 'The Methodists gave a hell of a sermon last week.'"

"RARE is like a shot in the arm," asserts Robert Kerr, manager of national parks in Jamaica. RARE's forte is blitzing communities, changing attitudes quickly enough to buy time for species and forests under human pressure. For the past year, the innovative American group has been working with Jamaican conservationists to build support among residents of rural mountain hamlets for the country's new national park in the Blue and John Crow mountains.

Jamaica's target species has been a butterfly, the giant, or homerus, swallowtail (*Papilio homerus*), the largest butterfly in the Western Hemisphere–found only in Jamaica. "It's big. It's like the size of your head," says Kerr. But the magnificent black-and-yellow insect with a six-inch wingspan is also in big trouble, its numbers having fallen sharply, partly from commercial collecting but also from destruction of its rain forest habitat. Today it flies only in a few of the more rugged corners of the island, including the Blue and John Crow mountains.

The butterfly is Jamaica's marketing symbol, but the real incentive for this campaign is protection of the

They perform to Punta rock song "The Animal's Cry" against background of Mayan ruin near Corozal.

Students from Belmopan Junior School shoulder special puppet theater on loan for environmental education.

human species and of Jamaica itself. Rivers flowing out of the new national park are the source of the water used by nearly half the populace, and those rivers are running low. The goal is to persuade some 250,000 poor people living in small farming communities on the periphery of the park that it is in their interest to help safeguard rather than abuse the newly set-aside forest.

RARE's weapon of choice in this battle is Janet (Patti) Bedasse, a former high school teacher in Kingston's famously tough Trench Town ghetto. A woman with a background in public relations and links to Jamaica's business world, she is blessed with a mellifluous voice capable of weaving spells on children and adults alike.

In a classroom in Mount Felix, a hamlet near the new park's Cuna Cuna Pass, Bedasse makes the usual plea for youthful disarmament. She holds up a large slingshot and asks the youngsters what it is used for. "Shoot birds!" comes the proud reply. Bedasse gently suggests that this is inappropriate behavior, telling the class that some Blue Mountain birds are migrants: "You wouldn't want to kill a tourist bird would you?"

She discusses weather cycles and the role of trees in making rain. Projecting slides of the giant swallowtail on a bedsheet taped to the blackboard, she talks about butterfly protection. "I'm here to tell you that some people want our butterfly. Them come, them kill it, them take it to another country. You think that right?"

"Noooo," comes the chorus of replies.

"Ninety-nine percent of it is the counterparts," says Paul Butler. "One percent is the program." He is fiercely proud of the Bedasses and Manzaneros and other local counterparts who do RARE's work, and he sometimes seems a little troubled over the gaps in public awareness with regard to heroes sung and unsung.

Catch the Parrot Man after a long day afield, preferably after he's been well soaked by a tropical rainstorm and bounced about in the back of a pickup. When he's finally had a chance to dry off and have a couple of restorative beers, he is apt to reflect on the endless loop of TV nature specials that frame and feature the developed world's clean-cut environmental saviors as they go about their duties in the Third World–and he will ask why the spotlight so seldom shines on the locals.

"Nobody sees the films of Rafael. Of Patti in Jamaica. And there are hundreds like them."

A Rafael movie: on a sunny late afternoon in the tropics, our camera tracks the dashing young conservation officer as he strides confidently across a suspension footbridge over the swollen Belize River. An Englishman in wrinkled slacks and untucked shirt follows, complaining at every step about the wild swaying of the bridge. The pair hop a "bus"–a truck with plank seats in the rear–for the bumpy, 40-minute ride to Valley of Peace.

This is a large village of thatch-roofed homes occupied by refugees; the dirt streets are filled with children at play, pigs, dogs, turkeys. Rafael Manzanero pays a courtesy call on the president of the farmers' cooperative, a small, lean man with skin the color of tobacco. Manzanero borrows a bicycle and pedals off to round up

residents for a presentation on good farming methods.

Evening settles over the village as farmers in straw cowboy hats gather at the school. Dozens of bicycles are parked outside, many with machetes stuck in the frames. In Spanish, Manzanero greets the 50-some farmers. One by one, he invites them to the front to open small doors on a portable signboard. A teaching aid, the signboard is most clever. Six panels on the front illustrate the conservation officer's main points–such as the value of clearing a firebreak when burning to prepare land for planting. Each panel can be swung open, revealing an illustration behind it that shows what happens when the best farming practices are not followed–an out-of-control fire, say, that torches the forest where the wild animals live. Farmers called to the front explain what they see. Discussion follows. As each man sits down, Manzanero requests a round of applause.

From inside the classroom, frog calls can be heard. Thunder rumbles in the night. Manzanero listens to a complaint from the co-op president. Tapirs are trampling corn and digging up yams. The conservation officer smiles at the delicate nature of the problem, the tapir being Belize's revered and protected national animal, and not a beast one can shoot as a pest. He suggests the problem be reported to the Forest Department. The president shoots back, to much laughter, "I am reporting it to the Forest Department right now!"

The meeting is over, and the thunder has turned to rain. A farmer with a pickup offers a ride back to the river. Alas, the only space remaining is in the open truck bed. Passengers holding on for life, the truck wallows through ruts and mudholes in the darkness. The bush presses in; water sweeps across the floor of the truck bed. Halfway to the river, the truck dies, its engine sputtering to silence. The night is dark, the rain is hard as the conservation officer leaps into the muddy road. He fiddles beneath the hood. The truck starts–miracle!

Rafael Manzanero clambers back into the rear and the truck resumes its lurching progress. His English friend, the Parrot Man, huddles behind the cab. He squawks loudly about the cold stream of water sluicing down his spine. Conservation officer Manzanero has stripped off his shirt. Drenched, he stands in the pitching truck bed, facing the road, his black hair plastered to his scalp, his visage dimly lit by the backthrow from the headlights on the rain. He looks every inch a hero.

On an impromptu farewell circuit through Corozal, in northern Belize, Rainbow and members of Toucan Dancing Group hand out leaflets and wave from back of pickup after finishing a local outreach program.

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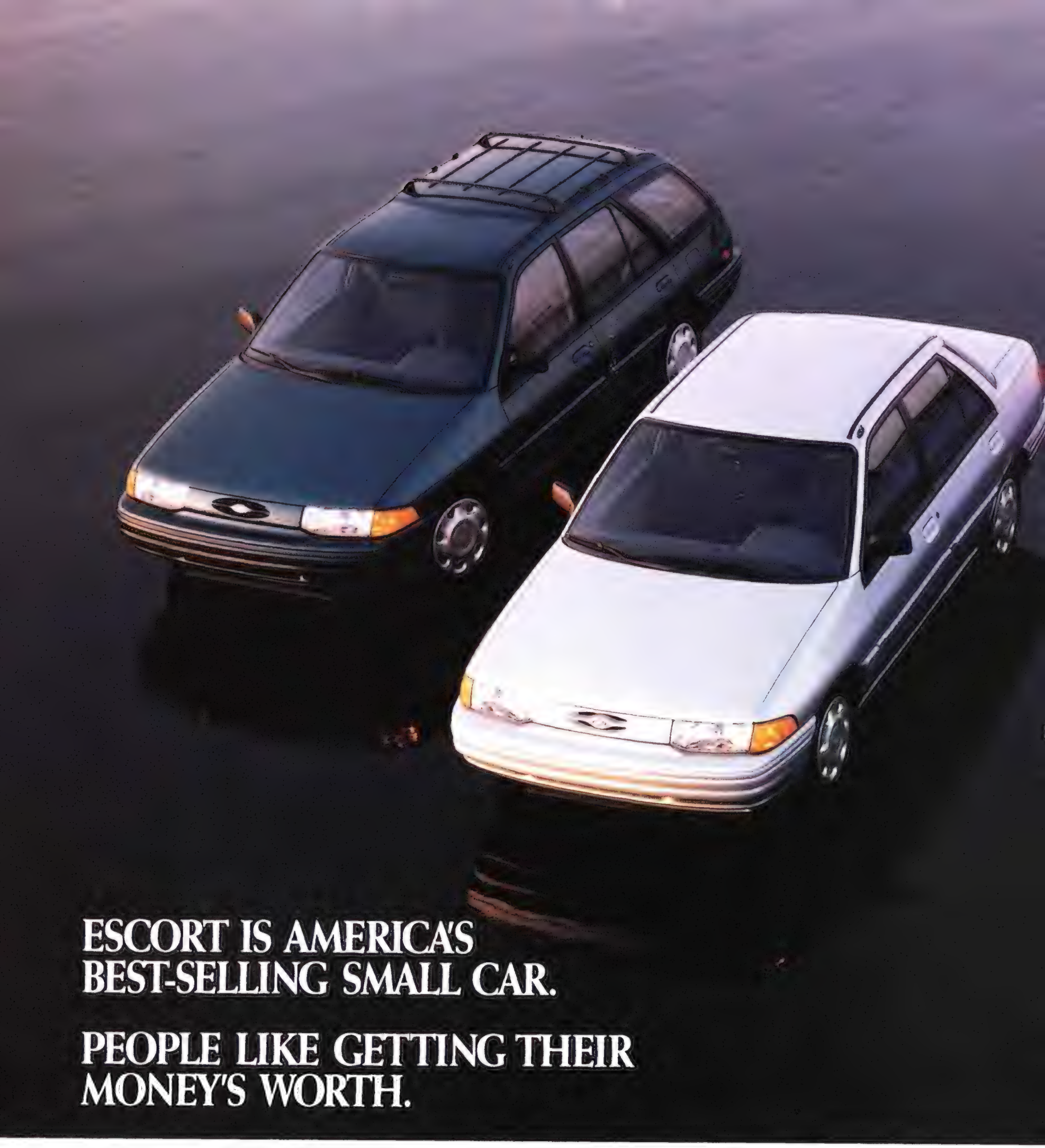

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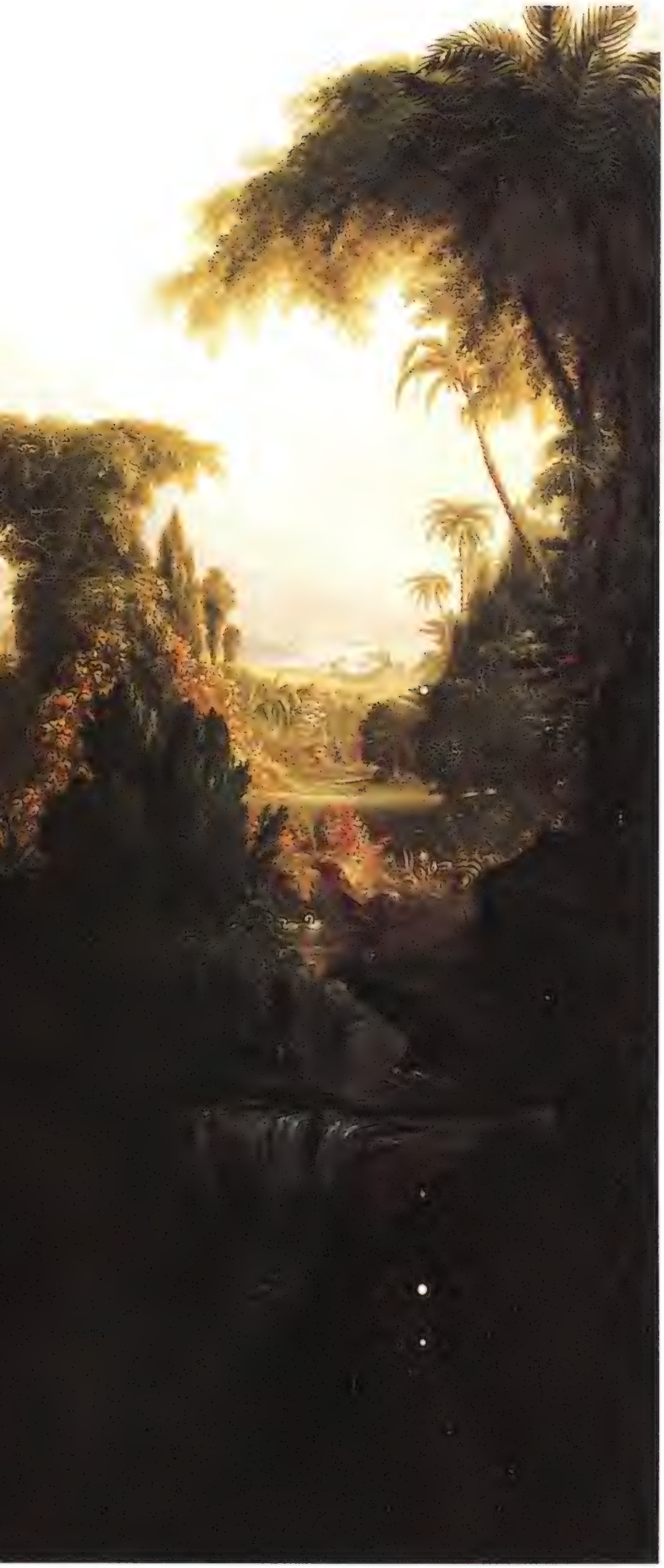
Cole painted *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden* (above) and its paired work, *Garden of Eden*, in 1827-28, two years after being "discovered" by artist John Trumbull, who saw his landscapes in a New York shop window.



The *Eden* paintings were Cole's first use of landscape as the background for a religious or historical theme.

By Henry Adams

The American land inspired Cole's prescient visions

A major exhibition explains how the artist grappled with the tensions he saw between the natural world and the forces of progress

When the Erie Canal opened, in October 1825, it established New York as the commercial hub of the United States. At the same time, New York abruptly became the center of an American school of landscape painting. That month, in the window of a New York frame shop, the aging history painter Col. John Trumbull saw three small landscapes of the Hudson River painted by Thomas Cole, a man he had never heard of. Trumbull was so excited by the paintings in the window that he rushed to tell his friend William Dunlap, a playwright, journalist and painter. Ordinarily pompous, the colonel, for once, was humble. "This youth," he exclaimed, "has done what I have all my life attempted in vain."

Accompanying Trumbull to look at the paintings, a skeptical Dunlap was immediately won over. "When I saw the pictures," he later wrote, "I found them to exceed all that this praise had made me expect." Soon afterward, when they met Cole, Dunlap was startled by the young artist's youthfulness, pallor and shyness. Later he recalled that Cole had stood "like a school boy in the presence of the trustees," blushing and stammering, even though neither of the two elderly artists "could produce a rival to the works he offered for the paltry price of $25 each." The two grayhairs each promptly bought one of the landscapes; the third was acquired by the engraver Asher B. Durand, who eventually became one of Cole's most important followers.

Within a few weeks, Dunlap sold his painting at a staggering markup to a New York aristocrat named Philip Hone; but he more than made up for this profiteering

National Portrait Gallery

At age 44, Thomas Cole sat for a daguerreotype that is attributed to Mathew Brady; he died three years later.

by writing an effusive account of Cole's work in one of the New York newspapers. The effect of this promotion was immediate. As wealthy men eagerly bought Cole's paintings, his prices rose rapidly. In 1829 Cole sold his *Garden of Eden* for $400, sixteen times what he had received for his paintings only four years earlier. Despite occasional fluctuations, his paintings steadily increased in value throughout his career.

Cole's success, however, was not simply financial. Dunlap's article opened the floodgates to an ocean of critical tributes. As Philip Hone wrote, "I think every American is bound to prove his love of country by admiring Cole." And in 1835, *The Knickerbocker* magazine wrote of Cole, "We look upon him, at this moment, as the best landscape painter in the world."

Although such statements sound fulsome today, Cole is still recognized as the founder of American landscape painting; and once again he is the focus of attention. The exhibition "Thomas Cole: Landscape into History," curated by William H. Truettner and Alan Wallach, is now on view at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American Art in Washington, D.C. After closing on August 7, it will move to the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut (September 11-December 4) and then to the New-York Historical Society (January 8-March 25, 1995). The first retrospective of Cole's paintings for many decades, it brings together for the first time in 150 years his two allegorical series, "The Course of Empire" and "The Voyage of Life."

This is a very interesting time for a reconsideration of Cole's art. While viewers of 50 years ago tended to see his paintings as prettified and sentimental renditions of American scenes, the organizers of the current exhibition have focused on a more complex dimension to Cole's vision–a knot of conflict and ambivalence that carries through every phase of his career. As he matured, Cole seems to have been increasingly torn between nature and the forces of progress, grappling with the issue of our relationship with the land–an issue that still troubles American society today.

Cole's rapid rise to fame in the early 19th century marked a sudden shift in American taste. In the 17th and 18th centuries, American painters distinguished themselves first in portraiture and then in history painting, but they showed little interest in the landscape around them. Then, with the emergence of Cole, landscape rather quickly supplanted figure painting as the most important expression of American artists, a position it retained throughout most of the 19th century.

Why, in Cole's time, did landscape suddenly attract great popular interest? For one thing, most of America's wealth came from land; while cities were growing rapidly, the vast majority of the population were still farmers. In addition, this was a period of remarkable national expansion. In 1803 Jefferson signed the Louisiana Purchase; in 1819 Florida was bought from Spain; in 1836 Texas declared its independence from Mexico, and in 1845 it was admitted as a state; and in 1848 the United States took from Mexico what is now California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, most of New Mexico and parts of Colorado–a territory greater than the British Isles, France and Italy combined. As Ellwood Parry has pointed out in his recent biography of the artist, the year Cole's art was discovered, the Erie Canal opened up the interior of the country to transport and commerce; the year he died, 1848, gold was discovered in California, transforming the United States into a truly continental nation.

In the midst of this rapid change, Cole and the Hudson River painters emphasized unspoiled nature over the ordered, man-made environment. Most of their patrons were not farmers but city people, such as wholesale grocer Luman Reed. Reed had grown up in the country but had moved to the city and prospered there. For people like him, landscape paintings did not represent the environment they actually lived in; rather, these paintings contrasted with their crowded urban environ-

Henry Adams is the director of the Cummer Gallery of Art and Gardens in Jacksonville, Florida. He last wrote for SMITHSONIAN *on Rubens, in October 1993.*

ment, allowing a nostalgic return to the world of their childhood. A passage from Asher Durand's "Letters on Landscape Painting" in *The Crayon*, one of the first American art magazines, makes this clear. "To the rich merchant and capitalist," he wrote in 1855, "Landscape Art especially appeals. . . . Suppose such a one, on his return home, after the completion of his daily task of drudgery–his dinner partaken, and himself disposed of in his favorite arm-chair, with one or more faithful landscapes before him, . . . many a fair vision of forgotten days will animate the canvas, and lead him through the scene: pleasant reminiscences and grateful emotions will spring up at every step, and care and anxiety will retire far behind him."

Beyond "Satanic mills," romantic views of nature

Perhaps Cole was particularly sensitive to this taste for the "faithful landscape" because he spent his early years in a very different setting. Born in 1801 in Lancashire, England, he had grown up in an area already being blackened by the "Satanic mills" of which Blake wrote. His family was poor, and he was apprenticed to an engraver of calico designs. His mother and his doting sisters provided his chief companionship; in his free moments he took walks with his younger sister Sarah, sketched, played his flute and read. To a large degree his artistic ideas seem to have been shaped by the romantic poets such as Byron, Coleridge and Wordsworth, with their keen sense of romantic longing and their nostalgic love of the heroic past and the world of nature.

When Cole was 17, he emigrated with his family to the United States: his father, a hand-weaver, had been unable to compete with the new industrial machinery. On arrival, they settled briefly in Philadelphia; then his family moved on to Ohio. Catching up with them the following year, Cole made the journey on foot from Philadelphia to Steubenville, where they had settled. For a time he designed wallpaper for a factory his father had established and taught drawing for a ladies seminary his sisters founded. When both these ventures failed, he attempted to support himself as an itinerant portraitist, wandering from town to town offering likenesses for a modest fee. The pay was poor, and he finally gave up when he found that he had been preceded by another wandering painter named Des Combes. Despite limited skill, Des Combes had already portrayed the principal citizens of the region, exhausting most of the available patronage.

Cole had felt uncomfortable with portraiture, anyway. The pressure of working with the sitter right there in front of him caused him agonies of embarrassment and shyness. Uncertain what to do next, he began to make drawings of gnarled and twisted trees, partly naturalistic, partly a strange expression of his inner emotional turmoil.

Gradually, by his mid-20s, Cole developed the ambition of becoming a landscape painter. In the winter of 1823, wrapped in a tablecloth since he didn't have a warm coat, he crossed the Allegheny Mountains to Philadelphia. There, he painted and studied Old Master paintings at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. In the spring of 1825 he made his way to New York, spending the late summer sketching along the Hudson. Then, in a small garret room on Greenwich Street in New York City, he executed three landscapes–the paintings discovered by John Trumbull–that would establish his reputation.

During the first phase of his career, from 1825 to 1829, Cole concentrated on American scenes. What startled and excited viewers of his paintings was the degree to which he represented the savagery of nature, untouched or nearly untouched by the hand of humans. The effect was ominous, and yet filled with promise, suggesting the vastness of the very landscape that was being opened up to commerce and civilization. But too restless to remain content with a single theme, Cole set off in 1829 for a three-year trip to Europe, visiting England, France and Italy, in turn.

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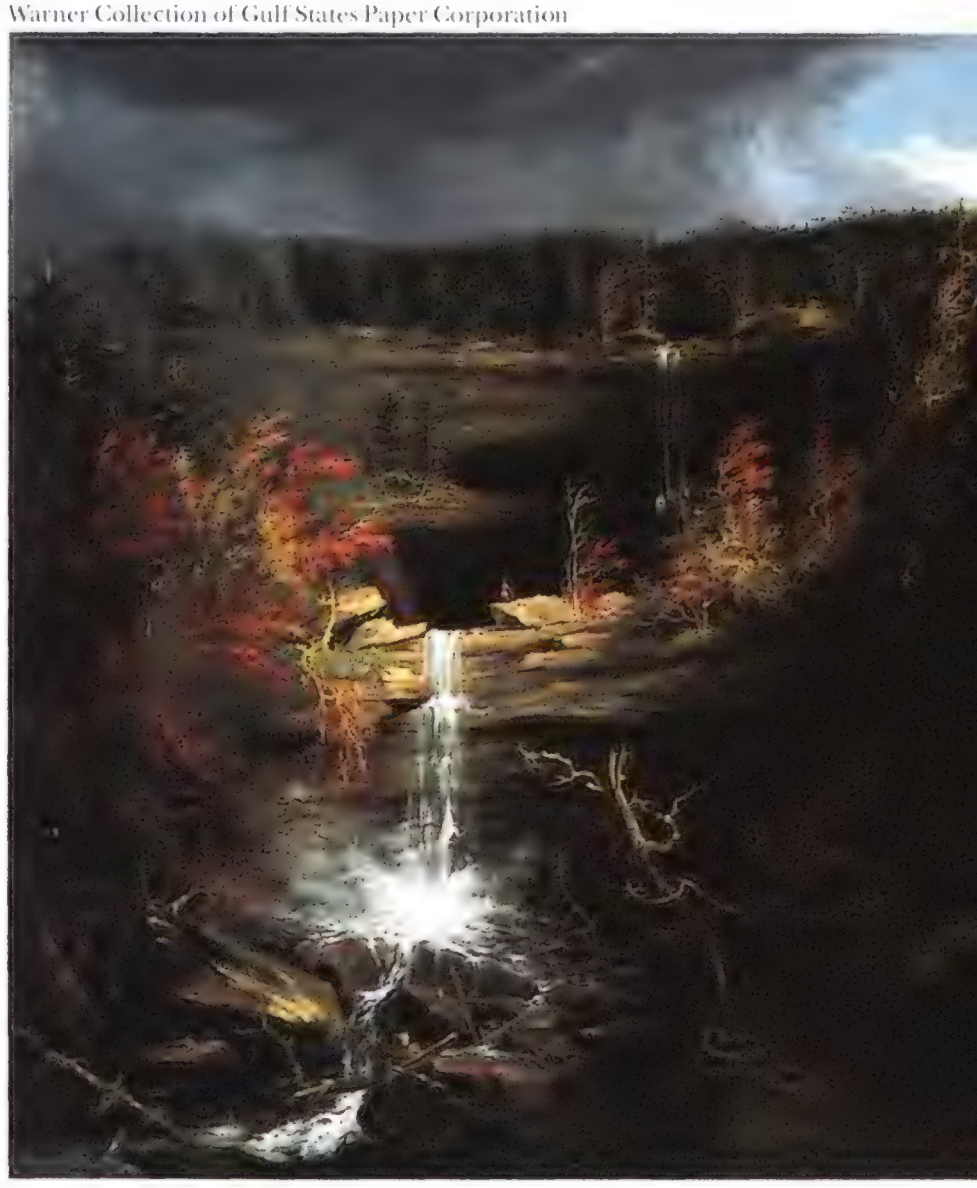

The Falls of Kaaterskill (1826) typifies Cole's depictions of nature as yet unspoiled; here, in the Catskills.

All: New-York Historical Society

Same mountain is unchanged in three works from Cole's allegorical "Course of Empire" series (1834-36).

England, his first stop, proved a disappointment, for he received a cold welcome. Cole was infuriated that his work was "skied" in exhibitions–that is, hung in the top tier, where it was hardest to see–to make room for what he described as the "vilest daubs, caricatures, and washy imitations." Paris was also a letdown. "The subjects which the French artists seem to delight in are either bloody or voluptuous," he complained. "Death, murder, battles, Venuses, Psyches, are portrayed in a cold, hard, often tawdry style of color and with an almost universal deficiency of chiaroscuro. The whole is artificial and theatrical."

Italy, however, was for Cole the "land of poetry and beauty." In Rome, he rented Claude Lorrain's former studio; in Florence, he produced a series of landscapes of Italian subjects–ancient ruins bathed in golden light and filled with a gentle nostalgia for the vanished glories of the past. This became the second major theme of his art–the pastoral, Arcadian landscape, generally in an Italian setting.

On his return to the United States in 1832, Cole divided his time between New York City and the town of Catskill, where he rented an outbuilding on an estate. There he met and married his landlord's niece, Maria Bartow, a "sweet, madonna-looking" maiden, who eventually bore him five children. It was a comfortable life. Cole had a studio built for himself that was modeled on an Italian villa, and while he painted, Maria often read to him. Occasionally, he went on rambles to find storms or lonely mountains to paint, or made forays to New York City to drum up new patronage, even though cities filled him with a "presentiment of evil." Alternating between Italian and American scenes, he developed his third major artistic device: paintings in a series, which comment on and complement one another in both visual form and theme.

In two instances, Cole created a group of paintings dealing with the most profound issues of morality and history. His five-painting work "The Course of Empire" (1834-36), the most ambitious project of his career, traced the evolution of an imaginary empire from a state of wild nature through civilization, consummation, destruction and final desolation. The central painting, *Consummation* (above), gave him particular difficulty. After a long summer of labor, he wrote that he had "rubbed out enough for five pictures." *Destruction* also gave him trouble. "I have been engaged in sacking and burning a city," he wrote to his friend Asher Durand, "and am well tired of such horrible work." However, the final painting of the series, entitled *Desolation*, was

At center is *Consummation*; details at left and right depict earlier pastoral state and later destruction.

quickly dashed off. One of Cole's most powerful creations, it shows the sun setting over ivy-covered ruins, untouched by living human presence. The mood of the painting is bittersweet; one senses that Cole was relieved to see the follies of man overwhelmed by nature.

The novelist James Fenimore Cooper considered this series Cole's finest achievement (although he slightly scrambled its title). Shortly after Cole's death, he wrote, "Not only do I consider the March of Empire the work of the highest genius this country has ever produced, but I esteem it as one of the noblest works of art that has ever been wrought. . . ."

Cole's other major series, "The Voyage of Life," is also tragic in its progression. The first two paintings, *Childhood* and *Youth*, are optimistic, with sunny, cheerful settings and a soap-bubble palace in the sky luring the voyager onward. *Manhood* and *Old Age*, however, are considerably darker in feeling. In *Manhood*, for example, the protagonist is rushed through terrifying rapids,

while the demon forms of Suicide, Intemperance and Murder emerge from the mist (p. 104).

Both "The Course of Empire" and "The Voyage of Life" were great successes; they sold for large sums and were greeted with popular acclaim. And yet, Cole grew increasingly touchy and pessimistic as the years went on. Though he labeled critical voices the "buzz of dirt flies," any attack on his work depressed his spirits. "Had fortune favored me a little more," he once wrote, "I would have followed out the principles of beauty and sublimity in my work that have been cast aside because they were not marketable. . . . I am not the painter I would have been had taste been higher."

His last trip to Europe did not, as he hoped, have the effect of "renovating my artistic feeling." Instead, he found himself overwhelmed by a sense of his own unworthiness in contrast to the Old Masters. "I began too late in life," he lamented, "but I will do my best." In July 1842 he returned to the United States, where he produced both Italian landscapes and American scenes, some recognizable, others imaginary, and started a third ambitious series, "The Cross and the World." In February 1848 he suddenly fell ill and died, leaving this project on his easel, still incomplete.

He left a legacy of paintings in which landscape, for the first time, served as the expression of American destiny. America had a brief history, Cole had noted, and thus had no temples, cathedrals, castles or other monuments of the grandeur of the past. Instead, the "most distinctive, and perhaps the most impressive characteristic of American scenery, is its wildness." This did not

mean, however, that American scenery lacked historical interest, since it served as an open playing field for the future march of progress. As Cole noted, in the somewhat purple language of the time: "In looking over the yet uncultivated scene, the mind's eye may see far into futurity. Where the wolf roams, the plough shall glisten; on the gray crag shall rise temple and tower–mighty deeds shall be done in the now pathless wilderness; and poets yet unborn shall sanctify the soil."

Cole's great contribution was to discover a visual language to express this attitude–that is, to find a way of using landscape painting to express a conception of history. In fact, like a text, Cole's paintings form a tightly organized symbolic structure, in which every element carries narrative significance, inviting moral and historical reflections.

To achieve this feat, Cole adopted existing theories of art and esthetics and used them in original ways. Of particular significance were the concepts of the "sublime," the "beautiful" and the "picturesque." Ideas of the sublime and the beautiful were based on a famous essay by English philosopher Edmund Burke. The sublime was seen as ominous and terrifying, things that excite us by awakening our sense of danger–storm clouds, precipices, thundering waterfalls. The beautiful included those images that are gratifying to the senses and give us pleasure to look at–golden sunsets, flowers, gently flowing water. Later, this construct was expanded to include the idea of the picturesque. Essentially, this was a combination of the beautiful and the sublime in a kind of dialogue with each other, to create landscapes that swayed the emotions back and forth as the eye wound its way through them.

Cole's landscapes tend to be visually organized according to these categories. Many of his early landscapes of American scenery are essentially sublime, filled with such elements as mountains, jagged rocks, dead trees and seemingly limitless expanses of forest, with no sign of human habitation. Interestingly, it is more difficult to compose a painting that is entirely beautiful, according to the terms that Burke defined, since it would be largely lacking in dramatic interest. But Cole did occasionally produce paintings filled with beautiful elements, such as *Old Mill at Sunset*, which shows children picking flowers against a peaceful lake with a glowing sunset.

Most of his landscapes, however, are neither purely sublime nor purely beautiful, but are divided to create a kind of movement from one to the other. One of the most dramatic instances of this is *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden*, which depicts Adam and Eve being ejected from paradise by the angel with the flaming sword. The left side of the composition is filled with elements that are sublime, from the fierce storm to the wolf on a foreground ledge, devouring a stag. Much of the center is a black void. At the right is a glimpse into paradise, a lush landscape suffused with golden light–the beautiful.

Somewhat similar in overall design is Cole's famous American landscape *View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm*, popularly known

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In *Manhood*, the third of four large paintings in the "Voyage of Life" series, a pilgrim prays as his tiny craft is swept into wild water.

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as *The Oxbow* (below), which shows the Connecticut River where it makes a dramatic bend. Again, the left side of the composition is devoted to the sublime, with its turbulent weather, while the greater part of the painting is devoted to beautiful elements.

By creating divided landscapes, and hence movement between the beautiful and the sublime, Cole constructed narratives of either secular or sacred history. In addition, both religious and secular history offered two basic kinds of narrative–optimistic and pessimistic. As we have seen, Cole dealt with the fall of man in *Expulsion from the Garden*, while he dealt with the coming of grace in such paintings as *Saint John in the Wilderness* and his unfinished cycle, "The Cross and the World," which showed the Christian pilgrim achieving a state of heavenly grace by following the sign of the Cross through a desolate landscape.

Secular history also offered the possibility both of ascent and progress and of decline and fall. Paintings such as *The Oxbow* seem to show the skies clearing to reveal the American land as a new Garden of Eden. Others, like the "Course of Empire" series, move from a state of unspoiled nature to final overthrow and ruin.

The drama of Cole's paintings depends not only on these powerful contrasts, but on the ambiguity of the lessons we are asked to draw from them. For example, in "The Course of Empire" it is unclear whether Cole regarded this cycle of decline and fall as inevitable, or whether he hoped that by studying the example of the past, Americans might be encouraged to be virtuous, avoiding the ruin that overcame their predecessors. What is clear is that Cole's landscapes struck a deep chord in the American psyche.

And yet, during his final years, Cole was increasingly troubled by an issue that is of importance today: the devastation inflicted on our land in the name of progress. Especially in his writings, Cole was deeply concerned about this issue, which brings us another rich perspective from which to view the evolution of his paintings in the exhibition.

On the one hand, Cole often celebrated the advances of civilization and its conquest of the savagery of nature. When he sought to evoke a new Garden of Eden, as he did in *The Oxbow*, he showed carefully cultivated fields glowing in the sunlight. On the other hand, in his later paintings, Cole began to portray the encroachment of people and industry on the natural world. A rather modest painting of 1843, *River in the Catskills*, has been singled out by scholars as the "first painting by a major American artist in which the railroad is found."

In his writings, Cole expressed himself more forcefully on this issue. In one of his essays on American scenery, published in 1841, he deplored the "ravages of the axe," complaining that the beautiful trees surrounding the town of Catskill had been shorn away. "That which a century cannot restore is cut down," he wrote. "Where once was beauty, there is now barrenness." Rather than in cultivated fields, he now proposed Eden should be found instead in the unspoiled beauty of na-

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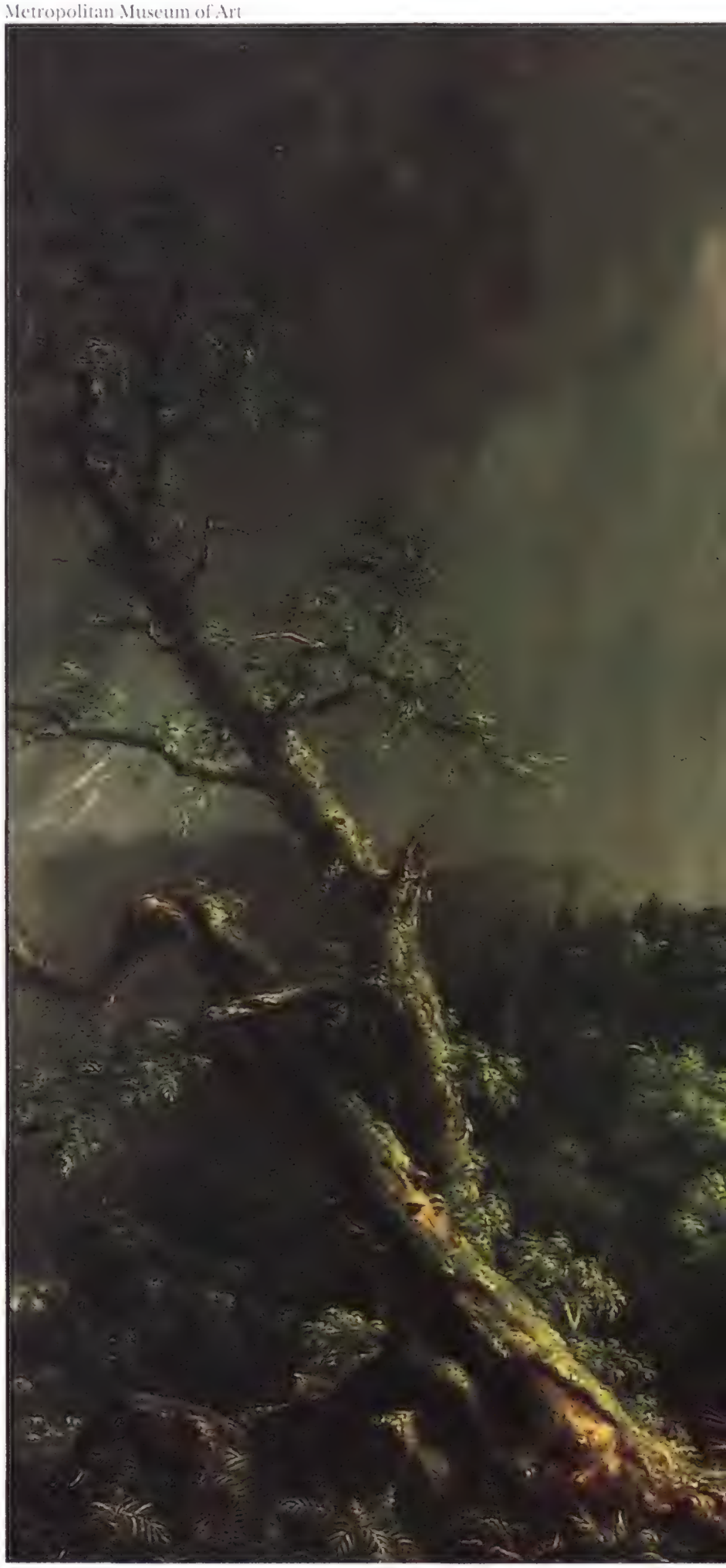

Cole put himself (center foreground) in *The Oxbow*, a dramatic 1836 landscape of Northampton, Massachusetts.

ture. "We are still in Eden," he declared. "The wall that shuts us out of the garden is our own ignorance and folly." He expressed these feelings even more forcefully in a remarkable poem, published in 1841, that takes the form of trees lamenting their imminent destruction. "Our doom is near," the trees declare. ". . .We feed ten thousand fires: in our short day/The woodland growth of centuries is consumed."

But Cole's most bitter complaints against the destruction of natural beauty occurred in his letters to his patron, Luman Reed. "The copper-hearted barbarians are cutting all the trees down in the beautiful valley on which I have looked so often with a loving eye," he wrote. Later, with singular pessimism, he concluded: "If I live to be *old enough* I may sit down under some bush the last left in the utilitarian world and feel thankful that intellect in its march has spared one vestige of the ancient forest for me to die by."

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On a balmy summer night, folks around Abingdon, Virginia, head into the Moonlite Theatre as they have done since it opened in 1949. One of the survivors, the drive-in now offers a roster of family movies.

Big screen, night sky–good times

It seems as if everybody remembers drive-in movies with fondness; Douglas Merriam does, and now he's busy photographing what's left of them

Little metal boxes with bad sound that you hung on the side of the driver's window. B-movies like *Creature from the Black Lagoon* and *Plan 9 from Outer Space*. Pajama-clad kids in the backseat, squabbling over seat turf and popcorn, more interested in the teenage couple parked behind them than in the screen. Mom and Dad going easy on them, grateful to be out of the house at all. This was Saturday night at the drive-in movie, a scene repeated on the outskirts of countless towns across the country for the better part of a half-century. The drive-ins peaked in 1958, when there were more than 4,000 of them.

Three years ago, freelance photographer Doug Merriam revisited his first drive-in. He'd been 8; it was during a family vacation in Maine; they'd seen *The Love Bug*. Finding the place boarded up and overgrown with weeds, he decided to document as many drive-ins around the country as he could find. "They were declining at such an alarming rate that it was hard just to get information," he says. "That was an indication to me that this would be a good story." So far, he has searched out and photographed more than two dozen drive-ins, guided by invaluable sources such as the *Joe Bob Report*, a sassy fanzine out of Dallas that reviews B-movies and tracks the fortunes of the few remaining drive-ins, and old-timers like Hugo Zeiter, who started showing movies on the outside of his house in 1930, three years before the first drive-in opened in Camden, New Jersey.

One day, camera at hand, Merriam watched 63-year-old Paul Sherman taking apart Houston's old I-45 Drive-In (a K mart now stands on the spot). Scrambling 60 feet to the top of the screen, Sherman–who salvages old drive-ins for a living–lit into the rusty frame with a cutting torch. "You OK up there?" Merriam called. "Oh, yeah," Sherman yelled back; "I'm just getting old. I guess I'm going out with the drive-ins."

Constance Bond

Since 1930, before drive-in movies had even opened, Hugo Zeiter of Ridgefarm, Illinois, has traveled from town to town, showing films on the sides of buildings. And he lets kids without money watch for free.

George Kelloff, owner of the Best Western Movie Manor in Monte Vista, Colorado, built a motel next to his drive-in movie business and equipped each room with a large picture window and a speaker.

Shankweiler's, which opened in Orefield, Pennsylvania, in 1934, is the oldest operating drive-in and the second one ever built. It's a mom-and-pop operation that survives by attracting families.

American Classics Drive-In, at New York City's indoor Dezerland entertainment complex, gives patrons a nostalgia trip: vintage movies such as *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*–and great convertibles.

The screen's metal supports are all that remain of the Zuni Drive-In, located in Gallup, New Mexico, on old Route 66. Called the "mother road," it was dotted with drive-ins.

Vacationers and other summer churchgoers in Houlton, Maine, can attend services without leaving their cars; the old drive-in hasn't shown a movie in 17 years.

An unusually ornate box office glows with bright neon, which was used liberally by drive-ins to attract passing motorists; this is the Avon in Breese, Illinois.

Like a ghost from an old B-movie, a junker nestles in the weeds at the Illiana Drive-In, which is now surrounded by development on the outskirts of Danville, Illinois.

By Daniel Stashower

A thin man who made memorable use of his Spade

Private eye turned writer Dashiell Hammett created a hard-boiled hero–and a new kind of crime novel, starring gumshoes with guts, was born

Five crates of British sovereigns were missing from the hold of the ocean liner *Sonoma* when she docked in San Francisco on November 23, 1921. Police and customs agents moved in, but a shipwide search for the gold came up empty. Worse yet, the *Sonoma* was due to sail for Australia in a few days, and authorities could do nothing to stop her.

The world-renowned Pinkerton Detective Agency (motto: "We Never Sleep") assigned one of its top men to the case, a 27-year-old operative named Dashiell Hammett. A tall and angular young man with reddish hair combed into a high pompadour, Hammett enjoyed a fair reputation as a sleuth and "shadow man." Despite his striking appearance, he could tail a suspect for days at a time without detection.

It was decided that Hammett would sign on to the *Sonoma* in the guise of a journeyman sailor and track down the missing coins at sea. The assignment suited him; he'd always wanted to see Australia and looked forward to the long journey. Hours before the ship was due to sail, however, the young detective conducted a final sweep of the vessel. He promptly discovered the stolen coins hidden away inside a smokestack. "You haven't sense enough to be a detective," he berated himself. "Why couldn't you have discovered the gold one day out

Dashing as any character he invented, ex-Pinkerton operative Hammett was the toast of Hollywood in 1930s.

at sea?" In disgust, he handed in his resignation that very afternoon.

Dashiell Hammett, who was born 100 years ago this month, liked to tell stories about his Pinkerton days. Undoubtedly he burnished some of his tales over the years and perhaps fabricated a few more. Others he turned into fiction. In a writing career that lasted only about a dozen years, Hammett pioneered a new form of American fiction, the "hard-boiled" detective story, with such novels as *Red Harvest* and *The Maltese Falcon*. Before Hammett, American mystery writers tended to look toward England for inspiration, and borrowed heavily from the quaint, "tea cozy" tradition of the gentleman detective, the sinister butler and the body in the library.

Hammett burst on the scene like a fist to the jaw and reworked the crime novel into something new and uniquely American. He had a flawless ear for street talk. His knife-edged prose caught the rhythm of an era, and his tough-guy hero, Sam Spade, with trenchcoat and snap-brim hat, has been copied and hyped and caricatured ever since. (A famous tough-detective spoof by humorist Max Shulman begins: "Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Four shots ripped into my groin, and I was off on the biggest adventure of my life.") "Hammett," declared Raymond Chandler, creator of the superdetective Philip Marlowe, "gave murder back to the kind of people that commit it for reasons, not just to provide a corpse; and with the means at hand, not with hand-wrought duelling pistols, curare, and tropical fish. He put these people down on paper as they are, and he made them talk and think in the language they customarily used for these purposes. He had style, but his audience didn't know it, because it was in a language not supposed to be capable of such refinements."

John Huston's 1941 film version of *The Maltese Falcon* made Bogart a superstar, and became a cult classic.

No expectation of living beyond Thursday

As is rarely the case with detective story writers, Hammett's life was as colorful as his fiction. He chased crooks, hobnobbed with movie stars, served in two wars, and drank and smoked with a missionary zeal. He made a fortune and managed to fritter away every last nickel. To playwright Lillian Hellman, his companion for 30 years, he was "a man of simple honor and great bravery." To Senator Joseph McCarthy he represented a Communist threat, and Hammett did jail time in 1951 for refusing to name names.

It was a remarkably full life for a man who began dying at the age of 25. Hammett suffered from tuberculosis, and as he grew increasingly frail he wrote out of desperation–it was the only work left that he could do. Illness brought an urgent force to his life. "Hammett," said the writer Nunnally Johnson, "had no expectation of being alive much beyond Thursday."

He was born on a Maryland tobacco farm called Hopewell and Aim on May 27, 1894. His full name was Samuel Dashiell Hammett, the middle name being his mother's nod toward aristocratic French ancestors. His father, Richard, hated farming; hoping to make his fortune in the city, he settled the family in Baltimore. As a child, Dashiell excelled in his studies but had to drop out at the age of 13 to help his father try to support the family. A dogged curiosity took up where his formal education left off. Hammett read whatever he could get his hands on, even slogging through Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* the year he left school. He worked a series of odd

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Hammett's wife, Josephine Dolan, was nurse when they met in Army hospital, 1920.

jobs, never lasting long in one place, a pattern he attributed to laziness. "I'm a two-fisted loafer," he later claimed. "I can loaf longer and better than anybody I know. I did not acquire this genius. I was born with it."

When Hammett signed up as a Pinkerton detective at 21, he found a job that suited him. The agency had been in the crime-busting business for 65 years: Pinkerton men had thwarted Presidential assassinations, broken up counterfeiting rings, collared kidnappers and holdup men. Its famous logo–a single, unblinking eye–had brought the phrase "private eye" into the language, although founder Allan Pinkerton preferred to call his employees "operatives" (SMITHSONIAN, August 1981).

Hammett enjoyed life as a "Pink"; the independence and variety appealed to his restless spirit. He once tracked down a man who had stolen a Ferris wheel. "You don't steal something that big for your backyard," he explained. "I knew it had to be at another carnival." Not all his cases met with triumph. Once, Hammett got careless on a "tail job" and allowed his quarry to double back behind him. The suspect slammed a brick onto his head. Hammett carried a squarish indentation in his skull for the rest of his life.

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When America entered World War I, he took leave from Pinkerton's to join the Army, serving an uneventful hitch as an ambulance driver–this tenure as soldier never took him more than 20 miles from his home in Baltimore. "I was a sergeant during the war, but–please get this straight–not in the war," he would later say. "The war and my service in the Army were contemporary, that's about all you can say about it."

Even so, Hammett left the service with his health shattered. A virus put him in the infirmary, and it was there that his tuberculosis was diagnosed. He spent the next couple of years checking in and out of Army hospitals, surviving on a small disability pension. Far from a model patient, he drank, smoked and chased women, even from his sickbed.

One of the women Hammett pursued was a pretty young nurse named Josephine Dolan. When he recovered sufficiently to make a fresh start in San Francisco, Josephine followed. The two were married but had few prospects. Hammett's illness permitted only occasional jobs for the local Pinkerton office. At times he grew so feeble that he had to place chairs along the hallway of their apartment, so he could stop and rest on the way to the bathroom.

When a baby daughter arrived in 1921, the family's finances grew desperate. Hammett began writing, he later claimed, "to keep the butcher away from the door while I tried to bluff the baker." Within a few years he would be dictating his stories from a Hollywood penthouse, but in those days he sat up all night at an old kitchen table, writing poetry, book reviews, short stories and virtually anything else he could sell.

Most of Hammett's early stories went to a little-known detective pulp called *Black Mask*, which also gave Chandler his start. In its cramped columns of text–wedged between ads for neuralgia powders and obesity cream–a tough, cynical new world was taking shape. Here, tommy guns blazed, rotgut whisky flowed, and only the brave or foolish took the shortcut through the alley. "The law was something to be manipulated for profit and power," Chandler wrote of Hammett's tales. "The streets were dark with something more than night."

Hammett did not invent this world. Carroll John Daly, whose hero Race Williams slept with a gun in his hand, preceded Hammett onto the pages of *Black Mask* by a few months. If left in Daly's hands–"Show me the man, and if he's drawing on me and is a man what really needs a good killing, why, I'm the boy to do it"–the hard-boiled school of fiction would likely have withered on the vine. Hammett brought something new to the party. The Pinkerton man knew what he was talking about: "My bedside phone took my ear out of the pillows. The voice that came over the wire was the Canadian op's. 'Exit Arlie,' he said. 'R.I.P.?' 'Yep.'

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'How?' 'Lead.' 'Our lad's?' 'Yep.' 'Keep till morning?' 'Yep.' 'See you at the office,' and I went back to sleep."

For his first stories, Hammett introduced a nameless detective called the Continental Op. In contrast to the square-jawed, steely-eyed heroes of other pulp writers, the Op was tubby and middle-aged, an ordinary person doing his job.

Black Mask paid only a penny a word, and while some writers could churn out enough material to scrape by, Hammett was not one of them. So he decided to try his hand at a novel. His first full-length work, it starred the Continental Op and was published serially in *Black Mask* under the title "Poisonville." Despite its excessively high body count, the novel saw Hammett, and his tough first-person narrative, in top form: "I first heard Personville called Poisonville by a red-haired mucker named Hickey Dewey in the Big Ship in Butte. He also called his shirt a shoit. I didn't think anything of what he had done to the city's name. Later I heard men who could manage their r's give it the same pronunciation. I still didn't see anything in it but the meaningless sort of humor that used to

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Jewel-encrusted Maltese falcon lured Sam Spade (Bogart, with Peter Lorre, Mary Astor, Sydney Greenstreet) into the realm of murder; here they ogle a fake.

make richardsnary the thieves' word for dictionary. A few years later I went to Personville and learned better."

When the final installment appeared, Hammett sent the manuscript off to the publisher Alfred A. Knopf. Knopf's wife, Blanche, picked the book out of the slush pile. An influential editor, she spotted its potential and agreed to publish it–after changing "Poisonville," the "hopeless" title, to *Red Harvest.*

"I'm one of the few–if there are any more–people moderately literate who take the detective story seriously," Hammett wrote in a letter to Blanche Knopf. "I don't mean that I necessarily take my own or anybody else's seriously–but the detective story as a form. Some day somebody's going to make 'literature' out of it." The writer who did that most artfully was Chandler, but Hammett had shown the way.

Red Harvest was published in 1929 to wide acclaim–the poet Robert Graves would hail it as "a literary landmark"–but Hammett was too busy working to notice. He quickly brought out *The Dain Curse,* a second Continental Op story, and then turned his attention to a new, more ambitious work. Setting aside the Op, Hammett created a "hard and shifty" private eye called Sam Spade, who operated on the fringes of the law. "It's a long while since I burst out crying because policemen didn't like me," Spade says.

The action begins when an icy beauty named Brigid O'Shaughnessy hires Spade and partner Miles Archer to rid her of a criminal boyfriend, Floyd Thursby. She concocts a tale in which Thursby has run off with her sister, but in reality he is her accomplice in the search for a mysterious, jewel-encrusted statuette of a falcon. When Archer is gunned down in a back alley, police suspicion falls on Spade, who forms an uneasy alliance with the flaccid, malevolent Caspar Gutman to track down the priceless falcon. By the book's end, Spade has lied, cheated and double-crossed his way to justice. "Listen," Spade explains, "when a man's partner is killed he's supposed to do something about it. It doesn't make any difference what you thought of him. He was your partner and you're sup-

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posed to do something about it."

When *The Maltese Falcon* appeared in 1930, Hammett found himself the darling of literary society. "It seems to me that there is entirely too little screaming about the work of Dashiell Hammett," wrote Dorothy Parker in the *New Yorker*. "Anybody who doesn't read him misses much of modern America."

Ernest Hemingway also had a high opinion of *The Maltese Falcon*, which drew a wry acknowledgment from Hammett: "Must mean I'm a bad writer." The two men got along, but Hammett had little patience for Hemingway's macho displays. One night at the Stork Club, when a political discussion turned sour, Hemingway snatched up a tablespoon and bent it in the crook of his arm. "All right, kid," he said to Hammett, "let's see you do that." Refusing to take the bait, Hammett got up to leave. Hemingway grabbed his arm and pulled him back down. "No," said Hemingway, "let's see you do the spoon trick first." Hammett rose again. "I don't think I could bend the spoon," he said, quietly. "Why don't you go roll a hoop in the park?"

Hammett had more in common with the novelist William Faulkner, including a taste for alcohol even more powerful than Hemingway's. One evening,

Hammett's companion, the playwright Lillian Hellman, championed his works.

Witty detectives Nick and Nora Charles, here with Nick jr., took on lives of their own: William Powell and Myrna Loy starred in the *Thin Man* films.

having spent the day in a bar, the two writers decided to present themselves at a black-tie literary soirée. Dressed in shabby tweeds, they burst in on the formal dinner, shook a few hands, had a few drinks and then slipped quietly to the floor. Both men had to be carried from the room. Such episodes were not uncommon as Hammett's fame grew, and for a man in such precarious health he showed astonishing resilience. His writing sessions now had to compete with his partying, with the result that he scarcely wrote at all.

One night, while wrapping up a five-day binge, Hammett was introduced to Lillian Hellman, then a 24-year-old script reader. At the time, she recalled, Hammett was the "hottest thing in Hollywood and New York. It is not remarkable to be the hottest thing in either city–the hottest kid changes for each winter season–but in his case it was of extra interest to those who collect people that the ex-detective who had bad cuts on his legs and an indentation in his head from being scrappy with criminals was gentle in manner, well educated, elegant to look at, born of early settlers, was eccentric, witty, and spent so much money on women that they would have liked him even if he had been none of the good things."

Hellman was married at the time. Technically, so was Hammett. But though he dedicated *The Maltese Falcon* to his wife, the marriage had unraveled by the book's publication. Hammett consoled himself for a time with starlets and script girls, but in Hellman he found a brassy, independent spirit to match his own–a "she-Hammett," as he once called her. They never married, fought often and sometimes went their separate ways–but never for very long.

In 1930, the year she met Hammett, Hellman's career as a writer had barely begun. Hammett recognized her talent and encouraged her ambitions, even planting the seed that became her first play, *The Children's Hour*. Hammett could be a stern, even bullying taskmaster. Hellman has described his coaching style during revisions of *The Little Foxes*. "I was on the eighth version of the play before Hammett gave a nod of approval. Even then I, who am not a good-tempered woman, admired his refusal with me, or with anybody else, to decorate or apologize or placate. It

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came from the most carefully guarded honesty I have ever known, as if only he would muck up his world."

As an editor, Hammett was fiercely committed. As a companion, less so. Once, when Hellman phoned from New York to report on the success of a play opening, she was surprised to find herself speaking to his secretary. "I realized that I had called Hammett at 3:00 A.M. California time and that he had no secretary," she wrote. "I took a plane to Los Angeles. By the time I got to the house in the Pacific Palisades it was night and I had had a good deal to drink. I went immediately to the soda fountain–Hammett had rented the house from comedy star Harold Lloyd–smashed it to pieces and flew back to New York on a late plane."

As Hellman's career gathered force, Hammett's went into a stall. He managed to produce another novel, *The Glass Key*, hammering out the final third in one, arduous, 30-hour sitting. Most of the time, however, Hammett threw himself into the good life. He had gone West to "grab some of that Hollywood dough," but tossed away whatever he earned on penthouse suites, agreeable women and lavish parties.

These were the "fat, loose, wild years," recalled Lillian Hellman, and it came as a surprise when Hammett suddenly called a halt. In 1932, desperate for cash, he barricaded himself in New York's Sutton Club Hotel and determined to finish another novel. It was to be his famous *Thin Man*. "Life changed," wrote Hellman. "The drinking stopped, the parties were over. The locking-in time had come and nothing was allowed to disturb it until the book was finished. I had never seen anybody work that way; the care for every word, the pride in the neatness of the typed page itself, the refusal for ten days or two weeks to go out even for a walk for fear something would be lost."

The Thin Man marked a breezy departure from Hammett's earlier novels. Nick Charles, an ex-operative of the Trans-American Detective Agency and the epitome of 1930s-style wit and

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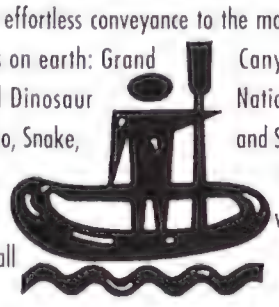

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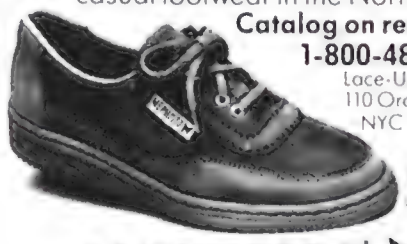

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sophistication, has given up the gumshoe business to manage properties belonging to his wife, Nora, a lumber heiress. When a former client disappears and his mistress turns up murdered, Nora urges Nick to take the case "just for the fun of it." Nick would plainly rather be out walking Asta, his dog, or partying ("This excitement has put us behind in our drinking"), but in due course he wraps up three murders.

Published in 1934, *The Thin Man* caused a stir and brought a windfall for Hammett. A series of overwhelmingly popular films followed, starring the inimitable William Powell and matchless Myrna Loy. Over more than a decade, Hammett's income from movie and radio serials approached a million dollars. In time, having grown very weary of Nick and Nora, he sold the screen rights for $40,000. "Nobody," Hammett grumbled, "ever invented a more insufferably smug pair of characters."

Hammett's drinking and high living reached dizzying new heights. He ignored script deadlines and often found himself suspended for drunkenness. Not surprisingly, his publisher, Alfred Knopf, lost patience. "I want nothing more to do with him," he told a rival publisher. "He is a terrible man."

Hammett had in fact reached the end of his productive life. *The Thin Man*, his fifth novel, would be his last. He accepted another advance but returned it two years later. "I'm afraid I'll never write it," he said wistfully. "I'm petering out." Still, his reputation flourished. In 1941 the director John Huston selected *The Maltese Falcon* as his first project. Though the book had been filmed twice before, Huston saw something in Hammett's spare, tough dialogue that the earlier movies had missed. When George Raft turned down the role of Sam Spade, Humphrey Bogart stepped in and, with a little help from Sydney Greenstreet, turned Hammett's story into a cult film classic.

The author took little note. His attention had now turned to politics. Like Hellman, he cultivated an interest in the 1950s left-wing causes then popular with the Hollywood elite. He freely lent his name to fundraising efforts, often joining such writers as Hemingway, John Dos Passos and Archibald

Hammett and codefendant Alphaeus Hunton (with cigarette) go to jail for contempt of court after refusing to name names at "Red menace" trial, 1951.

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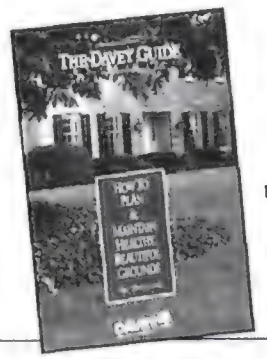

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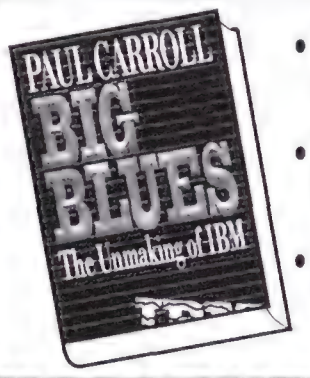

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MacLeish. Many of the organizations he joined, like the Civil Rights Congress of New York, were known for their Communist sympathies, but Hammett did not trouble himself much over this. "Communism to me is not a dirty word," he would later say. "When you are working for the advance of mankind, it never occurs to you whether a guy is a communist."

He campaigned for voters' rights and mounted registration drives for blacks and other minorities. He supported labor unions and encouraged the immigration of victims of foreign persecution. Above all, he was a staunch patriot. When the United States entered World War II, Hammett tried several times to enlist in the Army. By then an ill-preserved 48, he kept trying and even had his rotted teeth pulled in hopes of making the grade. When enlistment standards were relaxed in 1942, Hammett slipped in as a private. "He marched badly, coughed a lot, and looked like a bookkeeper forced into uniform," a fellow soldier wrote. "We thought him terribly old."

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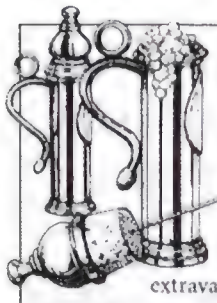

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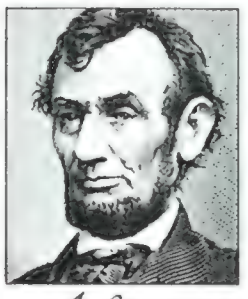

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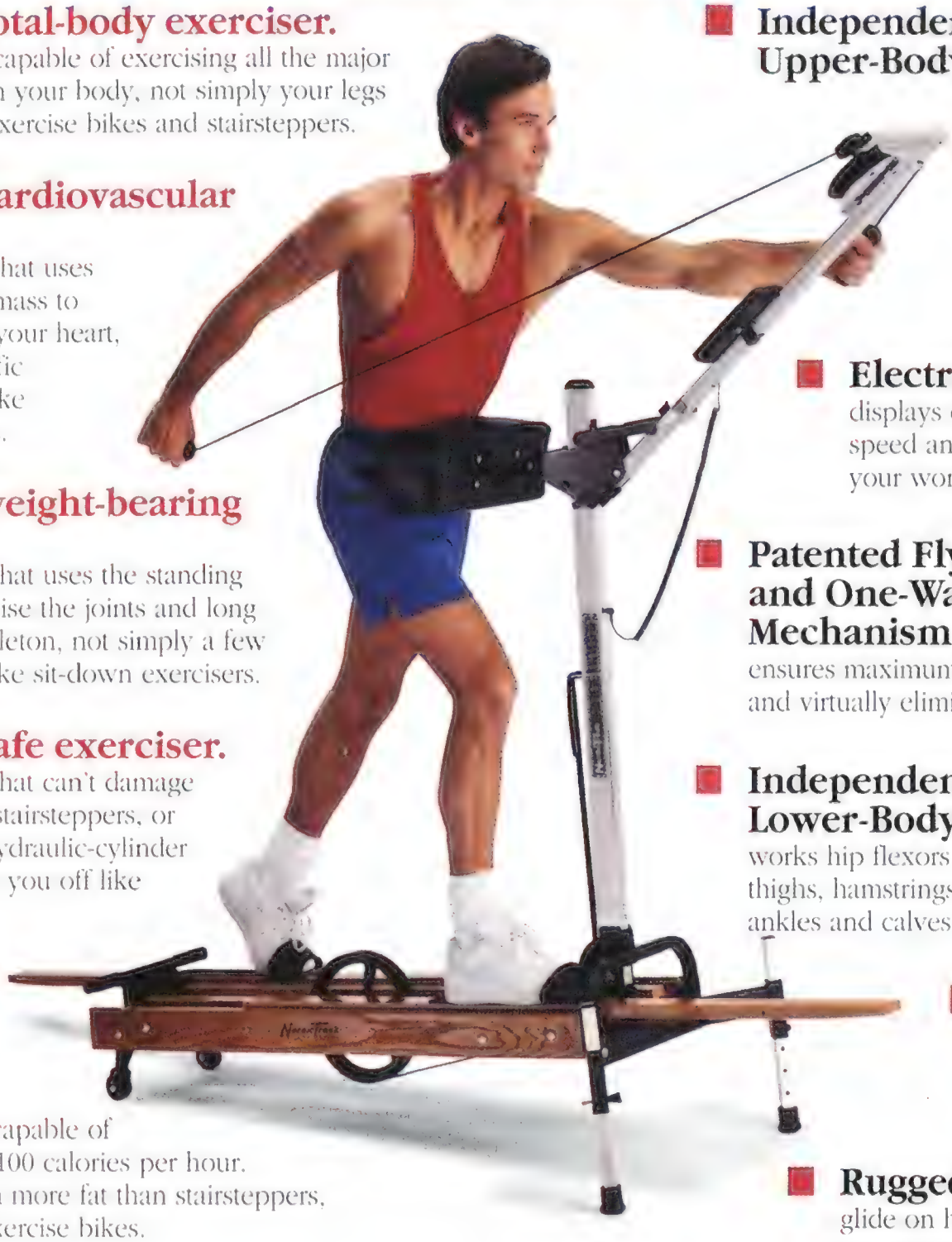

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Still a target of investigation, Hammett had to testify before Congress in 1953.

letter to Hellman about his toughness: "I am big, strong man who throw out the chest and laugh at war, 'ha ha!'" But he emerged from the service to find his old life gone forever. In the 1950s, as fear of Soviet Communism swept the country, Hammett became a high-profile target. His political activities, once fashionable, now appeared un-American. Even the radio commentator Walter Winchell had something to say on the subject: "Call him Dashiell Hammett and sickle."

When in 1951 four Communist Party leaders were convicted on charges of criminal conspiracy to overthrow the U.S. Government, Hammett landed in deep trouble. The Civil Rights Congress of New York, of which he was president, had put up their bail. When the four men disappeared, Hammett and some codefendants found themselves on the witness stand, asked to name the other contributors to the bail fund.

It would have been a simple matter to plead ignorance of the affair. "The truth was," Lillian Hellman insisted, "that Hammett had never been in the office of the congress, and did not know the name of a single contributor." But on the stand, Hammett stubbornly refused to give any information and was found guilty of contempt of court.

The author received a six-month jail sentence: he served time in Ashland, Kentucky, starting on September 5, 1951. Conversation with his fellow convicts, he said later, was really no worse than the average New York cocktail party. He performed his menial tasks with pride and sent word to Hellman that he was doing a far better job of cleaning the toilets than she ever did.

On Friday nights, while Hammett lay on his bunk smoking, prisoners would gather by the radio to listen to the adventures of Sam Spade. It seemed to the convicts that Hammett, the old guy who mopped up the latrine, had little in common with the hard-driving Spade, but it impressed them that he made money every time the program went out over the air. For the most part, his fame meant little in prison. The inmates were more impressed with his refusal to squeal on the witness stand. "I found the crooks had not changed since I was a Pinkerton man," Hammett later told an interviewer. "Going to prison was like going home."

On the day of his release, he received his bus ticket and $50 spending money. On the trip home, Hammett passed the 50 bucks over to a down-and-out and went hungry the rest of the way. But he was frail and sick; his bravado had begun to wear thin.

Hammett's reputation and finances had also taken a sharp decline, eroded by the label of Communist sympathizer. He was called up before Senator Joe McCarthy in 1953 and interrogated again about his politics.

Nothing came of this encounter. But by the early '50s his radio shows had been canceled, and all of his income had been attached by the IRS. Once he had earned $1,000 a week as a script consultant. Now he wrote pleading letters to the Veterans Administration, trying to get his disability pension reactivated.

A friend gave him the use of a gatekeeper's cottage in Katonah, New York. Twenty years had passed since the publication of *The Thin Man*, and after scores of false starts, Hammett set to work in earnest on a new novel. He soon abandoned it–though a fragment was later published as the story *Tulip–*

and gave up any pretense of writing. When asked about his future plans, he responded, "To keep breathing. That's my main job these days."

Breathing grew more and more difficult as Hammett fell prey to emphysema and, finally, inoperable lung cancer. Lillian Hellman was his constant companion. "I sat down beside him," she recalled in *An Unfinished Woman*, "and waited a long time before I could say, 'Do you want to talk about it?'

"He said, almost with anger, 'No. My only chance is not to talk about it.'" He died at New York's Lenox Hill Hospital on January 10, 1961.

In one of his last interviews, given at the cottage in Katonah, Hammett brooded over the decades of silence that followed *The Thin Man*. "I found I was repeating myself," he said. "It is the beginning of the end when you discover you have style." The interviewer, not quite satisfied, looked around the small house and noticed the typewriters gathering dust. If Hammett had really stopped working, he asked, why hang on to the typewriters?

Hammett, who had given the reporters a rather casual reception in his pajamas and robe, may have taken a moment to consider the question. It would have been simple enough to say that he kept them for sentiment, or used them for correspondence, or any one of a hundred easy answers. But even now, he remained unflinchingly honest. "I keep them," he said, "chiefly to remind myself I was once a writer."

If Hammett died forgotten, he did not remain so for long. Within months a literary rebirth was under way, spearheaded in large part by Hellman. Sam Spade, the Continental Op, and Nick and Nora Charles found a new generation of readers. Today his books are available in more than 150 languages.

In an alley off San Francisco's Burritt Street, a bronze plaque marks the spot where Sam Spade's partner, Miles Archer, met his untimely end. Undoubtedly Hammett would have been skeptical of his sudden rehabilitation and dismissed all tributes with a wave of his hand–except, possibly, for Lillian Hellman's words, spoken on the day of his funeral. "Never in all the years did he play anybody's game but his own," she said. "He never lied, he never faked, he never stooped." She added, perhaps unnecessarily, "He seemed to me a great man."

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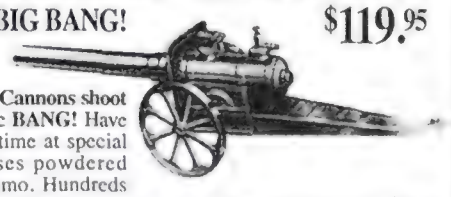

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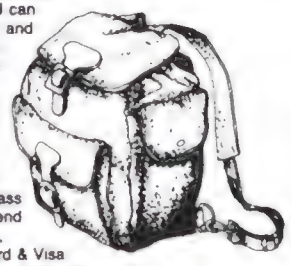

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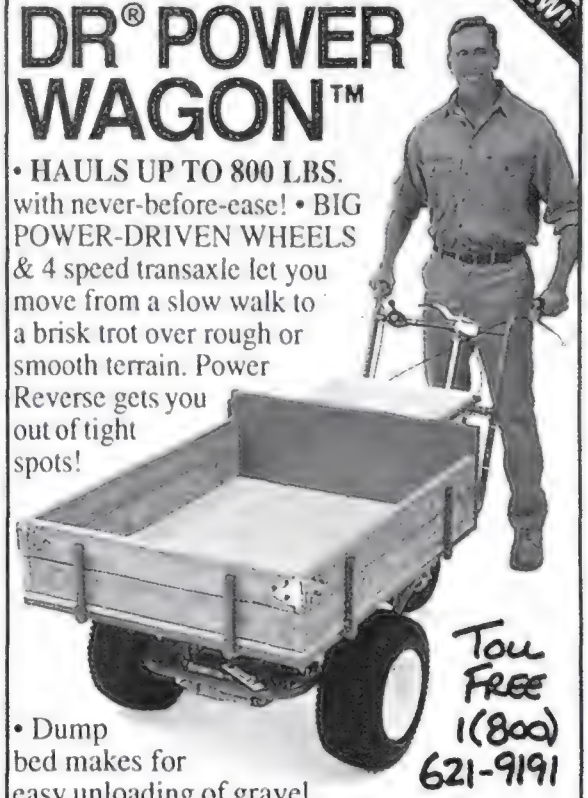

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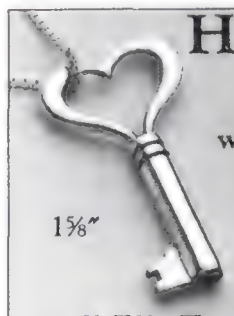

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By Robert W. Creamer

It's a garden of delight to root for the Wildflowers

I was watching a professional football game on television and at the same time leafing through a book called the *Beginners' Guide to Wildflowers.* You know how it is on a Sunday afternoon. You tend to doze off. Sometimes my eyelids closed for a minute or so, and in my half-dreaming, half-conscious state, the football game and the wildflower book got mushed together.

I woke to see a graceful wide receiver racing down the field and I thought, "Flame Azalea." The name seemed right. But just as he leapt and caught the ball he was absolutely clocked by a hard-hitting corner back. I winced.

"Spiny Clotbur," I muttered. "That guy is really tough."

I drifted into sleep again and came to just as a powerful running back went skittering through the line for a substantial gain.

"Zigzag Spiderwort!" I said admiringly. "Boy, there's no one who can find the holes the way old Zigzag can."

The dreamy afternoon went on like that, and football became completely decorated with wildflowers.

"Low Cudweed," I murmured just as my wife came through the room.

"What did you say, dear?"

I was suddenly wide awake.

"Low Cudweed," I said briskly. "Outside linebacker. Great player."

"That's nice," she said, and went on her way.

And I went on mine, scouting through the pages as I watched the game and coming up with more names. Pretty soon I had drafted an entire pro football team from that wildflower guide. I even named them the Wildflowers. We were a powerhouse.

Our middle linebacker was Ditch Stonecrop, an All Pro. Outside linebackers were Low Cudweed and a loose cannon named Dragon Arum. The line up front had Bitter Dock and Woolly Ragwort in the middle, Dog Rose and Mad Dog Skullcap on the outside. Mad Dog's kid brother, Showy Skullcap, was a defensive back who worked next to Spiny Clotbur. Unlike Spiny, Showy was a hot dog. The safeties were Rocket Larkspur and Sleepy Catchfly. Sleepy was very good at picking off interceptions.

The offensive team was built around a superb quarterback, Brook Lobelia, a handsome devil from Southern California. Brook usually gave the ball to Zigzag Spiderwort, but now and then he'd hand off to Mud Plantain, the fullback, who did the down-and-dirty blocking when Zigzag carried the ball. On passing plays Lobelia looked for his wide receivers, the incomparable Flame Azalea and the former Olympic sprinter Purslane Speedwell. If they were covered he would throw over the center to his tight end, big Greek Valerian. Lobelia had lots of time to find his receivers because of the great protection he got from the huge offensive linemen I had drafted from the pages of the wildflower guide. Bull Thistle at center, Deptford Pink and Blue Vetch as guards, Horse Nettle and Sneezeweed Yarrow at the two tackle positions.

When the Wildflowers had to punt, we called on Early Saxifrage, a theater major from Northwestern converted late to football, who was always poised and unruffled on the field. For points after and field goals it was Mithridate Mustard, a former soccer star who had played for Greece in the World Cup.

The club's owner was a nouveau riche wheeler-dealer named Marsh Bellflower, impeccably dressed, with perfectly groomed hair graying at the temples. Marsh was always in evidence at Wildflower games, sometimes in the locker room, sometimes on the sidelines. But he was very good about leaving football matters to his general manager, Flax Dodder, who had been a running back at Oklahoma before playing under Vince Lombardi at Green Bay. Flax was smart, and loyal. People liked the loyal way he kept his old Oklahoma sidekick, Yellowhorse Gentian, on the payroll as an assistant director of scouting.

The Wildflowers' head coach was Dutch Clover, a no-nonsense advocate of hard-nosed football. Clover's chief aides were the fawning Nodding Pogonia, his offensive specialist, and Hoary Frostweed, the irritable defensive coordinator. Team trainers were Red Baneberry and the comical Horse Balm. If an injury was too serious for Red and Horse to handle, they paged False Boneset, M.D., the team physician.

Up in the TV booth doing the Wildflowers' games was Broadlip Twayblade, a loud, hyperexcited throwback to the early days of broadcasting. Lip, as most folks called him, had as his colorman a former Wildflower defensive back, the small but capable Moth Mullein. Lip and Moth also did a pregame question-and-answer show with a couple of cynical sportswriters, Fetid Groundsel and Ipecac Spurge, whose sardonic comments could sear the skin on a linebacker's neck.

It was a garden of delight to root for the Wildflowers, although there were a few off-field distractions. Brook Lobelia fell in love with the owner's niece, Virginia Cowslip, which would have been OK if Brook hadn't become involved at the same time with the seductive TV anchor, Carolina Beechdrops. Smooth Beardtongue, my public relations man, kept that one from exploding into headlines. He had more trouble when a couple of our linemen got into a barroom brawl over a woman called Hairy Angelica. And then, of course, there was the time a few years earlier when Rough Gayfeather came out of the closet.

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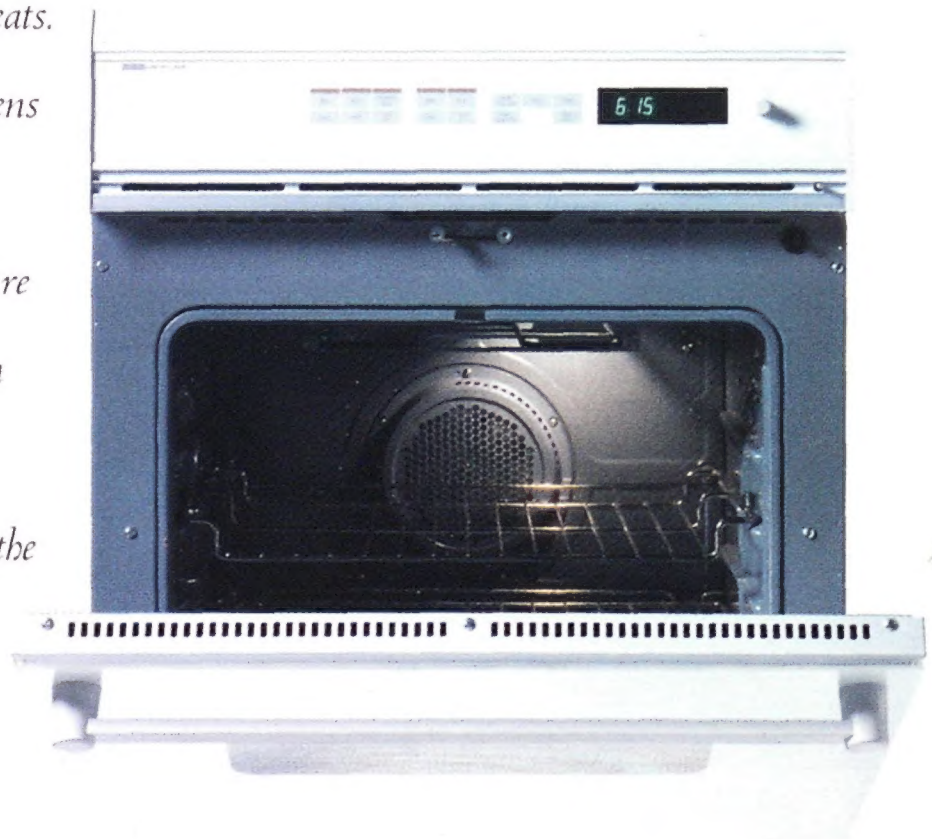

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